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JUNE, 1873.

A SIMPLETON.

A Story of the Day.

BY CHARLES READE.

[At the Author's particular request this story is not illustrated.]

CHAPTER XIX.

THE electrified man rushed out into the storm, but he scarcely felt it in his body; the effect on his mind overpowered hailstones. The lightning seemed to light up the Past; the mighty explosions of thunder seemed cannon strokes knocking down a wall, and letting in his whole life.

Six hours the storm raged, and, before it ended, he had recovered nearly his whole Past, except his voyage with Captain Dodd—that, indeed, he never recovered—and the things that happened to him in the hospital before he met Phoebe Falcon and her brother: and, as soon as he had recovered his lost memory, his body began to shiver at the hail and rain. He tried to find his way home, but missed it; not so much, however, but that he recovered it as soon as it began to clear, and, just as they were coming out to look for him, he appeared before them, dripping, shivering, very pale and worn, with the handkerchief still about his head.

At sight of him, Dick slipped back to his sister, and said, rather roughly, 'There now, you may leave off crying: he is come home; and to-morrow I take him to Cape Town.'

Christopher crept in, a dismal, sinister figure.

'Oh, sir,' said Phoebe, 'was this a day for a Christian to be out in? How could you go and frighten us so?'

'Forgive me, madam,' said Christopher, humbly; 'I was not myself.'

'The best thing you can do now is to go to bed, and let us send you up something warm.'

'You are very good,' said Christopher, and retired with the air of one too full of great amazing thoughts to gossip.

He slept thirty hours at a stretch, and then, awaking in the dead of night, he saw the past even more clear and vivid; he lighted his candle and began to grope in the 'Cape Gazette.' As to dates, he now remembered when he had sailed from England, and also from Madeira. Following up this clue, he found in the 'Gazette' a notice that H. M. ship 'Amphitrite' had been spoken off the Cape, and had reported the melancholy loss of a promising physician and man of science, Dr. Staines.

The account said every exertion had been made to save him, but in vain.

Staines ground his teeth with rage at this. 'Every exertion! the false-hearted curs. They left me to drown, without one manly effort to save me. Curse them, and curse all the world.'

Pursuing his researches rapidly he found a much longer account of a raft picked up by Captain Dodd, with a white man on it and a dead body, the white man having on him a considerable sum in money and jewels.

Then a new anxiety chilled him. There was not a word to identify him with Dr. Staines. The idea had never occurred to the editor of the 'Cape Gazette.' Still less would it occur to any one in England. At this moment his wife must be mourning for him. 'Poor—poor Rosa!'

But perhaps the fatal news might not have reached her.

That hope was dashed away as soon as found. Why these were all *old newspapers*. That gentlemanly man who had lent them to him had said so.

Old! yet they completed the year 1867.

He now tore through them for the dates alone, and soon found they went to 1868. Yet they were old papers. He had sailed in May, 1867.

'My God!' he cried, in agony, 'I HAVE LOST A YEAR.'

This thought crushed him. By-and-by he began to carry this awful thought into details. My Rosa has worn mourning for me, and put it off again. I am dead to her, and to all the world.'

He wept long and bitterly.

Those tears cleared his brain still more. For all that, he was not yet himself; at least, I doubt it; his insanity, driven from the intellect, fastened one lingering claw into his moral nature, and hung on by it. His soul filled with bitterness and a desire to be

revenged on mankind for their injustice, and this thought possessed him more than reason.

He joined the family at breakfast; and never a word all the time. But, when he got up to go, he said, in a strange, dogged way, as if it went against the grain, 'God bless the house that succours the afflicted.' Then he went out to brood alone.

'Dick,' said Phebe, 'there's a change. I'll never part with him: and look, there's Colly following him, that never could abide him.'

'Part with him?' said Reginald. 'Of course not. He is a gentleman, and they are not so common in Africa.'

Dick, who hated Falcon, ignored this speech entirely, and said, 'Well, Pheeb, you and Colly are wiser than I am. Take your own way, and don't blame me if anything happens.'

And soon Christopher paid the penalty of returning reason. He suffered all the poignant agony a great heart can endure.

So this was his reward for his great act of self-denial in leaving his beloved wife. He had lost his patient; he had lost the income from that patient; his wife was worse off than before, and had doubtless suffered the anguish of a loving heart bereaved. His mind, which now seemed more vigorous than ever, after its long rest, placed her before his very eyes, pale, and worn with grief, in her widow's cap.

At the picture, he cried like the rain. He could give her joy, by writing; but he could not prevent her from suffering a whole year of misery.

Turning this over in connection with their poverty, his evil genius whispered, 'By this time she has received the six thousand pounds for your death. *She* would never

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think of that; but her father has: and there is her comfort assured, in spite of the catiffs who left her husband to drown like a dog.'

'I know my Rosa,' he thought. She has swooned—ah, my poor darling—she has raved—she has wept—' he wept himself at the thought—' she has mourned every indiscreet act, as if it was a crime. But she *has* done all this. Her good and loving, but shallow nature, is now at rest from the agonies of bereavement, and nought remains but sad and tender regrets. She can better endure that than poverty: cursed poverty, which has brought her and me to this, and is the only real evil in the world, but bodily pain.'

Then came a struggle, that lasted a whole week, and knitted his brows, and took the colour from his cheek; but it ended in the triumph of love and hate, over conscience and common sense. His Rosa should not be poor; and he would cheat some of those contemptible creatures called men, who had done him nothing but injustice, and at last had sacrificed his life like a rat's.

When the struggle was over, and the fatal resolution taken, then he became calmer, less solitary, and more sociable.

Phoebe, who was secretly watching him with a woman's eye, observed this change in him, and with benevolent intentions, invited him one day to ride round the farm with her. He consented readily. She showed him the fields devoted to maize and wheat, and then the sheep-folds. Tim's sheep were apparently deserted; but he was discovered swinging head downwards from the branch of a camelthorn, and seeing him, it did strike one that if he had had a tail he would have been swinging by that. Phoebe called to him: he never answered, but

set off running to her, and landed himself under her nose in a wheel somersault.

'I hope you are watching them, Tim,' said his mistress.

'Iss, missy, always washing 'em.'

'Why there's one straying towards the wood now.'

'He not go far,' said Tim, coolly. The young monkey stole off a little way, then fell flat, and uttered the cry of a jackal, with startling precision. Back went the sheep to his comrades post haste, and Tim effected a somersault and a chuckle.

'You are a clever boy,' said Phoebe. 'So that is how you manage them.'

'Dat one way, missy,' said Tim, not caring to reveal all his resources at once.

Then Phoebe rode on, and showed Christopher the ostrich pan. It was a large basin, a form the soil often takes in these parts; and in it strutted several full-grown ostriches and their young, bred on the premises. There was a little dam of water, and plenty of food about. They were herded by a Cafir infant of about six, black, glossy, fat, and clean, being in the water six times a day.

Sometimes one of the older birds would show an inclination to stray out of the pan. Then the infant rolled after her, and tapped her ancles with a wand. She instantly came back, but without any loss of dignity, for she strutted with her nose in the air, affecting completely to ignore the inferior little animal, that was nevertheless controlling her movements. 'There's a farce,' said Phoebe. 'But you would not believe the money they cost me, nor the money they bring me in. Grain will not sell here for a quarter its value: and we can't afford to send it to Cape Town,

twenty days and back; but finery, that sells everywhere. I gather sixty pounds the year off those poor fowls' backs—clear profit.'

She showed him the granary, and told him there wasn't such another in Africa. This farm had belonged to one of the old Dutch settlers, and that breed had been going down this many a year. 'You see, sir, Dick and I being English, and not downright in want of money, we can't bring ourselves to sell grain to the middlemen for nothing, so we store it, hoping for better times, that maybe will never come. Now I'll show you how the dam is made.'

They inspected the dam all round. 'This is our best friend of all,' said she. 'Without this the sun would turn us all to tinder, crops, flowers, beasts, and folk.'

'Oh indeed,' said Staines. 'Then it is a pity you have not built it more scientifically. I must have a look at this.'

'Ay do, sir, and advise us if you see anything wrong. But hark! it is milking time. Come and see that.' So she led the way to some sheds, and there they found several cows being milked, each by a little calf and a little Hottentot at the same time, and both fighting and jostling each other for the udder. Now and then a young cow unused to incongruous twins, would kick impatiently at both animals and scatter them.

'That is their way,' said Phoebe: 'they have got it into their silly Hottentot heads as kye won't yield their milk if the calf is taken away; and it is no use arguing with 'em; they will have their own way; but they are very trusty and honest, poor things. We soon found that out. When we came here first it was in a hired waggon, and Hottentot drivers: so when we came

to settle I made ready for a bit of a wrangle. But my maid Sophy, that is nurse now, and a great despiser of heathens, she says, "Don't you trouble; them nasty ignorant blacks never charges more than their due." "I forgive 'em," says I; "I wish all white folk was as nice." However, I did give them a trifle over, for luck: and then they got together and chattered something near the door, hand in hand. "La, Sophy," says I, "what is up now?" Says she, "They are blessing of us. Things is come to a pretty pass, for ignorant Muslinmen heathen to be blessing Christian folk." "Well," says I, "it won't hurt us any." "I don't know," says she. "I don't want the devil prayed over me." So she cocked that long nose of hers and followed it in a doors.'

By this time they were near the house, and Phoebe was obliged to come to her postscript, for the sake of which, believe me, she had uttered every syllable of this varied chat. 'Well, sir,' said she, affecting to proceed without any considerable change of topic, 'and how do you find yourself? Have you discovered the Past?'

'I have, madam. I remember every leading incident of my life.'

'And has it made you happier?' said Phoebe, softly.

'No,' said Christopher, gravely. 'Memory has brought me misery.'

'I feared as much; for you have lost your fine colour, and your eyes are hollow, and lines on your poor brow that were not there before. Are you not sorry you have discovered the past?'

'No, Mrs. Falcon. Give me the sovereign gift of reason, with all the torture it can inflict. I thank God for returning memory, even with the misery it brings.'

Phoebe was silent a long time: then she said, in a low, gentle

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voice, and with the indirectness of a truly feminine nature, 'I have plenty of writing-paper in the house; and the post goes south to-morrow, such as 'tis.'

Christopher struggled with his misery, and trembled.

He was silent a long time. Then he said, 'No. It is her interest that I should be dead.'

'Well, but, sir—take a thought.'

'Not a word more, I implore you. I am the most miserable man that ever breathed.' As he spoke, two bitter tears forced their way.

Phoebe cast a look of pity on him, and said no more; but she shook her head. Her plain common sense revolted.

However, it did not follow he would be in the same mind next week: so she was in excellent spirits at her protégé's recovery, and very proud of her cure, and celebrated the event with a roaring supper, including an English ham, and a bottle of port wine; and, ten to one, that was English too.

Dick Dale looked a little incredulous, but he did not spare the ham any the more for that.

After supper, in a pause of the conversation, Staines turned to Dick, and said, rather abruptly, 'Suppose that dam of yours were to burst and empty its contents, would it not be a great misfortune to you?'

'Misfortune, sir! Don't talk of it. Why, it would ruin us, beast and body.'

'Well, it will burst, if it is not looked to.'

'Dale's Kloof dam burst! the biggest and strongest for a hundred miles round.'

'You deceive yourself. It is not scientifically built, to begin, and there is a cause at work that will infallibly burst it, if not looked to in time.'

'And what is that, sir?'

'The dam is full of crabs.'

'So 'tis; but what of them?'

'I detected two of them that had perforated the dyke from the wet side to the dry, and water was trickling through the channel they had made. Now, for me to catch two that had come right through, there must be a great many at work honey-combing your dyke; those channels, once made, will be enlarged by the permeating water, and a mere cupful of water forced into a dyke by the great pressure of a heavy column has an expansive power quite out of proportion to the quantity forced in. Colossal dykes have been burst in this way with disastrous effects. Indeed it is only a question of time, and I would not guarantee your dyke twelve hours. It is full, too, with the heavy rains.'

'Here's a go!' said Dick, turning pale. 'Well, if it is to burst, it must.'

'Why so? You can make it safe in a few hours. You have got a clumsy contrivance for letting off the excess of water: let us go and relieve the dam at once of two feet of water. That will make it safe for a day or two, and to-morrow we will puddle it afresh, and demolish those busy excavators.'

He spoke with such authority and earnestness, that they all got up from table: a horn was blown that soon brought the Hottentots, and they all proceeded to the dam. With infinite difficulty they opened the waste sluice, lowered the water two feet, and so drenched the arid soil that in forty-eight hours flowers unknown sprang up.

Next morning, under the doctor's orders, all the black men and boys were diving with lumps of stiff clay and puddling the endangered wall with a thick wall of it. This

took all the people the whole day.

Next day the clay wall was carried two feet higher, and then the doctor made them work on the other side and buttress the dyke with supports so enormous as seemed extravagant to Dick and Phoebe; but, after all, it was as well to be on the safe side, they thought: and soon they were sure of it, for the whole work was hardly finished when news came in that the dyke of a neighbouring Boer, ten miles off, had exploded like a cannon, and emptied itself in five minutes, drowning the farmyard and floating the furniture, but leaving them all to perish of drought; and indeed the Boer's cart came every day, with empty barrels, for some time, to beg water of the Dales. Ucatella pondered all this, and said her doctor child was wise.

This brief excitement over, Staines went back to his own gloomy thoughts, and they scarcely saw him, except at supper-time.

One evening he surprised them all by asking if they would add to all their kindness by lending him a horse, and a spade, and a few pounds, to go to the diamond fields.

Dick Dale looked at his sister. She said, 'We had rather lend them you to go home with, sir, if you must leave us; but, dear heart, I was half in hopes—Dick and I were talking it over only yesterday—that you would go partners like with us; ever since you saved the dam.'

'I have too little to offer for that, Mrs. Falcon; and, besides, I am driven into a corner. I must make money quickly, or not at all: the diamonds are only three hundred miles off: for heaven's sake, let me try my luck.'

They tried to dissuade him, and

told him not one in fifty did any good at it.

'Ay, but *I* shall,' said he. 'Great bad luck is followed by great good luck, and I feel my turn is come. Not that I rely on luck. An accident directed my attention to the diamond a few years ago, and I read a number of prime works upon the subject that told me things not known to the miners. It is clear, from the Cape journals, that they are looking for diamonds in the river only. Now, I am sure that is a mistake. Diamonds, like gold, have their matrix, and it is comparatively few gems that get washed into the river. I am confident that I shall find the volcanic matrix, and perhaps make my fortune in a week or two.'

When the dialogue took this turn, Reginald Falcon's cheek began to flush, and his eyes to glitter.

Christopher continued. 'You, who have befriended me so, will not turn back, I am sure, when I have such a chance before me; and, as for the small sum of money I shall require, I will repay you some day, even if —'

'La, sir, don't talk so. If you put it that way, why the best horse we have, and fifty pounds in good English gold, they are at your service to-morrow.'

'And pick and spade to boot,' said Dick, 'and a double rifle, for there are lions, and Lord knows what, between this and the Vaal river.'

'God bless you both!' said Christopher. 'I will start to-morrow.'

'And I'll go with you,' said Reginald Falcon.

CHAPTER XX.

'Heaven forbid!' said Phoebe. 'No, my dear, no more diamonds for us. We never had but one, and it brought us trouble.'

'Nonsense, Phoebe,' replied Falcon; 'it was not the diamond's fault. You know I have often wanted to go there; but you objected. You said you were afraid some evil would befall me. But now Solomon himself is going to the mines, let us have no more of that nonsense. We will take our rifles and our pistols.'

'There — there — rifles and pistols,' cried Phoebe; 'that shows.'

'And we will be there in a week; stay a month, and home with our pockets full of diamonds.'

'And find me dead of a broken heart.'

'Broken fiddlestick! We have been parted longer than that, and yet here we are all right.'

'Ay, but the pitcher that goes too often to the well gets broke at last. No, Reginald, now I have tasted three years' happiness and peace of mind, I cannot go through what I used in England. Oh, doctor! have you the heart to part man and wife, that have never been a day from each other all these years?'

'Mrs. Falcon, I would not do it for all the diamonds in Brazil. No, Mr. Falcon, I need hardly say how charmed I should be to have your company: but that is a pleasure I shall certainly deny myself, after what your good wife has said. I owe her too much, to cause her a single pang.'

'Doctor,' said the charming Reginald, 'you are a gentleman, and side with the lady. Quite right. It adds to my esteem, if possible. Make your mind easy; I will go alone. I am not a farmer. I am dead sick of this monotonous

life; and, since I am compelled to speak my mind, a little ashamed, as a gentleman, of living on my wife and her brother, and doing nothing for myself. So I shall go to the Vaal river, and see a little life; here there's nothing but vegetation—and not much of that. Not a word more, Phoebe, if you please. I am a good, easy, affectionate husband, but I am a man, and not a child to be tied to a woman's apron-strings, however much I may love and respect her.'

Dick put in his word. 'Since you are so independent, you can walk to the Vaal river. I can't spare a couple of horses.'

This hit the Sybarite hard, and he cast a bitter glance of hatred at his brother-in-law; and fell into a moody silence.

But, when he got Phoebe to himself, he descanted on her selfishness, Dick's rudeness, and his own wounded dignity, till he made her quite anxious he should have his own way. She came to Staines, with red eyes, and said, 'Tell me, doctor, will there be any women up there—to take care of you?'

'Not a petticoat in the place, I believe. It is a very rough life; and how Falcon could think of leaving you and sweet little Tommy, and this life of health, and peace, and comfort —'

'Yet you do leave us, sir.'

'I am the most unfortunate man upon the earth; Falcon is one of the happiest. Would I leave wife and child to go there? Ah me! I am dead to those I love. This is my one chance of seeing my darling again for many a long year perhaps. Oh, I must not speak of *her*—it unmans me. My good, kind friend, I'll tell you what to do. When we are all at supper, let a horse be saddled and left in the yard for me. I'll bid you all good night, and I'll put fifty miles between us before morn-

ing. Even then he need not be told I am gone; he will not follow me.'

'You are very good, sir,' said Phoebe; 'but no. Too much has been said. I can't have him humbled by my brother, nor any one. He says I am selfish. Perhaps I am; though I never was called so. I can't bear he should think me selfish. He *will* go: and so let us have no ill blood about it. Since he is to go, of course I'd much lieber he should go with you, than by himself. You are sure there are no women up there—to take care of—you—both? You must be purse-bearer, sir, and look to every penny. He is too generous when he has got money to spend.'

In short, Reginald had played so upon her heart, that she now urged the joint expedition, only she asked a delay of a day or two to equip them, and steel herself to the separation.

Staines did not share those vague fears that overpowered the wife, whose bitter experiences were unknown to him; but he felt uncomfortable at her condition—for now she was often in tears—and he said all he could to comfort her; and he also advised her how to profit by these terrible diamonds, in her way. He pointed out to her that her farm lay right in the road to the diamonds, yet the traffic all shunned her, passing twenty miles to the westward. Said he, 'You should profit by all your resources. You have wood, a great rarity in Africa; order a portable forge; run up a building where miners can sleep, another where they can feed; the grain you have so wisely refused to sell, grind it into flour.'

'Dear heart! why there's neither wind nor water to turn a mill.'

'But there are oxen. I'll show you how to make an ox-mill. Send your Cape cart into Cape Town for

iron lathes, for coffee, and tea, and groceries by the hundredweight. The moment you are ready—for success depends on the order in which we act—then prepare great boards, and plant them twenty miles south. Write, or paint, on them, very large, "The nearest way to the Diamond Mines, through Dale's Kloof, where is excellent accommodation for man and beast. Tea, coffee, home-made bread, fresh butter, etc., etc." Do this and you will soon leave off decrying diamonds. This is the sure way to coin them. I myself take the doubtful way; but I can't help it. I am a dead man, and swift good fortune will give me life. You can afford to go the slower road and the surer.'

Then he drew her the model of an ox-mill, and of a miner's dormitory, the partitions six feet six apart, so that these very partitions formed the bedstead, the bed-sacking being hooked to the uprights. He drew his model for twenty bedrooms.

The portable forge and the ox-mill pleased Dick Dale most, but the partitioned bedsteads charmed Phoebe. She said, 'Oh, doctor, how can one man's head hold so many things? If there's a man on earth I can trust my husband with, 'tis you. But, if things go cross up there, promise me you will come back at once and cast in your lot with us. We have got money and stock, and you have got head-piece: we might do very well together. Indeed, indeed we might. Promise me. Oh do, please, promise me!'

'I promise you.'

And, on this understanding, Staines and Falcon were equipped with rifles, pickaxe, shovels, water-proofs, and full saddle-bags, and started, with many shakings of the hand, and many tears from Phoebe, for the diamond washings.

CHAPTER XXI.

Phoebe's tears at parting made Staines feel uncomfortable, and he said so.

'Pooh, pooh !' said Falcon : 'crying for nothing does a woman good.'

Christopher stared at him.

Falcon's spirits rose as they proceeded. He was like a boy let loose from school. His fluency, and charm of manner, served, however, to cheer a singularly dreary journey.

The travellers soon entered on a vast and forbidding region, that wearied the eye : at their feet a dull rusty carpet of dried grass and wild camomile, with pale red sand peeping through the burnt and scanty herbage. On the low mounds, that looked like heaps of sifted ashes, struggled now and then into sickness a ragged, twisted shrub. There were flowers too, but so sparse, that they sparkled vainly in the colourless waste, which stretched to the horizon. The farmhouses were twenty miles apart, and nine out of them were new ones built by the Boers, since they degenerated into white savages : mere huts, with domed kitchens behind them. In the dwelling-house the whole family pigged together, with raw flesh drying on the rafters, stinking skins in a corner, parasitical vermin of all sorts blackening the floor, and particularly a small, biting, and odoriferous tortoise, compared with which the insect a London washerwoman brings into your house in her basket, is a stroke with a feather—and all this without the excuse of penury ; for many of these were shepherd kings, sheared four thousand fleeces a year, and owned a hundred horses and horned cattle.

These Boers are compelled, by unwritten law, to receive travellers

and water their cattle ; but our travellers, after one or two experiences, ceased to trouble them ; for, added to the dirt, the men were sullen, the women moody, silent, brainless ; the whole reception churlish. Staines detected in them an uneasy consciousness that they had descended, in more ways than one, from a civilized race ; and the superior bearing of an European seemed to remind them what they had been, and might have been, and were not ; so, after an attempt or two, our adventurers avoided the Boers, and tried the Kafirs. They found the savages socially superior, though their moral character does not rank high.

The Kafir cabins they entered were caves, lighted only by the door, but deliciously cool, and quite clean ; the floors of puddled clay or ants' nests, and very clean. On entering these cool retreats, the flies, that had tormented them, shirked the cool grot, and buzzed off to the nearest farm to batten on congenial foulness. On the fat, round, glossy babies not a speck of dirt, whereas the little Boers were cakes thereof. The Kafir would meet them at the door, his clean black face all smiles and welcome. The women and grown girls would fling a spotless handkerchief over their shoulders in a moment, and display their snowy teeth, in unaffected joy, at sight of an Englishman.

At one of these huts, one evening, they met with something St. Paul ranks above cleanliness even, viz., Christianity. A neighbouring lion had just eaten a Hottentot *faute de mieux* ; and these good Kafirs wanted the Europeans not to go on at night and be eaten for dessert. But they could not speak a word of English, and pantomimic expression exists in theory alone. In vain the women held our travellers by the coat tails, and pointed

to a distant wood. In vain Kafir père went on all-fours and growled sore. But at last a savage youth ran to the kitchen—for they never cook in the house—and came back with a brand, and sketched, on the wall of the hut, a lion with a mane down to the ground, and a saucer eye, not loving. The creature's paw rested on a hat and coat and another fragment or two of an European. The rest was foresthorted, or else eaten.

The picture completed, the females looked, approved, and raised a dismal howl.

'A lion on the road,' said Christopher, gravely.

Then the undaunted Falcon seized the charcoal, and drew an Englishman in a theatrical attitude, left foot well forward, firing a gun, and a lion rolling head over heels like a buck rabbit, and blood squirting out of a hole in his perforated carcase.

The savages saw, and exulted. They were so off their guard as to confound representation with fact; they danced round the white warrior, and launched him to victory.

'Aha!' said Falcon, 'I took the shine out of their lion, didn't I?'

'You did: and once there was a sculptor who showed a lion his marble group, a man trampling a lion, extracting his tongue, and so on; but report says, it *did not convince the lion*.'

'Why no; a lion is not an ass. But, for your comfort, there are no lions in this part of the world. They are myths. There were lions in Africa. But now they are all at the Zoo. And I wish I was there too.'

'In what character—of a discontented animal—with every blessing? They would not take you in; too common in England. Hallo! this is something new. What lots of bushes! We should

not have much chance with a lion here.'

'There are no lions: it is not the Zoo,' said Falcon; but he spurred on faster.

The country, however, did not change its feature; bushes and little acacias prevailed, and presently dark forms began to glide across at intervals.

The travellers held their breath, and pushed on; but at last their horses flagged; so they thought it best to stop and light a fire and stand upon their guard.

They did so, and Falcon sat with his rifle cocked, while Staines boiled coffee, and they drank it, and after two hours' halt, pushed on; and at last the bushes got more scattered, and they were on the dreary plain again. Falcon drew the rein, with a sigh of relief, and they walked their horses side by side.

'Well, what is become of the lions?' said Falcon, jauntily. He turned in his saddle, and saw a large animal stealing behind them with its belly to the very earth, and eyes hot coals; he uttered an eldritch screech, fired both barrels, with no more aim than a baby, and spurred away, yelling like a demon. The animal fled another way, in equal trepidation at those tongues of flame and loud reports, and Christopher's horse reared and plunged, and deposited him promptly on the sward; but he held the bridle, mounted again, and rode after his companion. A stern chase is a long chase; and for that or some other reason he could never catch him again till sunrise. Being caught, he ignored the lioness, with cool hauteur: he said he had ridden on to find comfortable quarters: and craved thanks.

This was literally the only incident worth recording that the companions met with in three hundred miles.

On the sixth day out, towards afternoon, they found, by inquiring, they were near the diamond washings, and the short route was pointed out by an exceptionally civil Boer.

But Christopher's eye had lighted upon a sort of chain of knolls, or little round hills, devoid of vegetation, and he told Falcon he would like to inspect these, before going farther.

'Oh,' said the Boer, 'they are not on my farm, thank goodness: they are on my cousin Bul-teel's;' and he pointed to a large white house about four miles distant, and quite off the road. Nevertheless, Staines insisted on going to it. But first they made up to one of these knolls, and examined it; it was about thirty feet high, and not a vestige of herbage on it; the surface was composed of sand and of lumps of grey limestone very hard, diversified with lots of quartz, mica, and other old formations.

Staines got to the top of it, with some difficulty, and examined the surface all over. He came down again, and said, 'All these little hills mark hot volcanic action—why they are like boiling earth-bubbles—which is the very thing, under certain conditions, to turn carbonate of lime into diamonds. Now, here is plenty of limestone unnaturally hard; and, being in a diamond country, I can fancy no place more likely to be the matrix than these earth-bubbles. Let us tether the horses, and use our shovels.'

They did so; and found one or two common crystals, and some jasper, and a piece of chalcedony all in little bubbles, but no diamond. Falcon said it was wasting time.

Just then, the proprietor, a gigantic, pasty colonist, came up, with his pipe, and stood calmly looking on. Staines came down,

and made a sort of apology. Bul-teel smiled quietly, and asked what harm they could do him, raking that rubbish. 'Rake it all away, mine friends,' said he: 've shall thank you moch.'

He then invited them languidly to his house. They went with him, and, as he volunteered no more remarks, they questioned him, and learned his father had been a Hollander, and so had his vrow's. This accounted for the size and comparative cleanliness of his place. It was stuccoed with the lime of the country outside, and was four times as large as the miserable farmhouses of the degenerate Boers. For all this, the street door opened on the principal room, and that room was kitchen and parlour, only very large, and wholesome. 'But Lord,'—as poor dear Pepys used to blurt out—'to see how some folk understand cleanliness!' The floor was made of powdered ants' nests, and smeared with fresh cow-dung every day. Yet these people were the cleanest Boers in the colony.

The vrow met them, with a snow-white collar and cuffs of Hamburg linen, and the brats had pasty faces round as pumpkins, but shone with soap. The vrow was also pasty-faced, but gentle, and welcomed them with a smile, languid, but unequivocal.

The Hottentots took their horses, as a matter of course. Their guns were put in a corner. A clean cloth was spread, and they saw they were to sup and sleep there, though the words of invitation were never spoken.

At supper, sun-dried flesh, cabbage, and a savoury dish the travellers returned to with gusto. Staines asked what it was: the vrow told him—locusts. They had stripped her garden, and filled her very rooms, and fallen in heaps under her walls; so she had

pressed them, by the million, into cakes, had salted them lightly, and stored them, and they were excellent, baked.

After supper, the accomplished Reginald, observing a wire guitar, tuned it with some difficulty, and so twanged it, and sang ditties to it, that the flabby giant's pasty face wore a look of dreamy content over his everlasting pipe; and in the morning, after a silent breakfast, he said, 'Mine vriends, stay here a year or two, and rake in mine rubbish. Ven you are tired, here are springbok and antelopes, and you can shoot mit your rifles, and we vill cook them, and you shall zing us zongs of Vaderland.'

They thanked him heartily, and said they would stay a few days, at all events.

The placid Boer went a-farming; and the pair shouldered their pick and shovel, and worked on their heap all day, and found a number of pretty stones, but no diamond.

'Come,' said Falcon, 'we must go to the river: and Staines acquiesced. 'I bow to experience,' said he.

At the threshold they found two of the little Bultels, playing with pieces of quartz, crystal, etc., on the door-stone. One of these stones caught Staines's eye directly. It sparkled in a different way from the others: he examined it: it was the size of a white haricot bean, and one side of it polished by friction. He looked at it, and looked, and saw that it refracted the light. He felt convinced it was a diamond.

'Give the boy a penny for it,' said the ingenious Falcon, on receiving the information.

'Oh!' said Staines. 'Take advantage of a child?'

He borrowed it of the boy, and laid it on the table, after supper.

'Sir,' said he, 'this is what we were raking in your kopjes for, and could not find it. It belongs to little Hans. Will you sell it us? We are not experts, but we think it may be a diamond. We will risk ten pounds on it.'

'Ten pounds!' said the farmer. 'Nay, we rob not travellers, mine vriend.'

'But, if it is a diamond, it is worth a hundred. See how it gains fire in the dusk.'

In short, they forced the ten pounds on him, and next day went to work on another kopje.

But the simple farmer's conscience smote him. It was a slack time; so he sent four Hottentots, with shovels, to help these friendly maniacs. These worked away gaily, and the white men set up a sorting table, and sorted the stuff, and hammered the nodules, and at last found a little stone as big as a pea that refracted the light. Staines showed this to the Hottentots, and their quick eyes discovered two more that day, only smaller.

Next day, nothing but a splinter or two.

Then Staines determined to dig deeper, contrary to the general impression. He gave his reason: 'Diamonds don't fall from the sky. They work up from the ground; and clearly the heat must be greater farther down.'

Acting on this, they tried the next strata, but found it entirely barren. After that, however, they came to a fresh layer of carbonate, and here, Falcon hammering a large lump of conglomerate, out leaped, all of a sudden, a diamond big as a nut, that ran along the earth gleaming like a star. It had polished angles and natural facets, and even a novice, with an eye in his head, could see it was a diamond of the purest water. Staines and Falcon shouted with delight,

and made the blacks a present on the spot.

They showed the prize, at night, and begged the farmer to take to digging. There was ten times more money beneath his soil, than on it.

Not he. He was a farmer: did not believe in diamonds.

Two days afterwards, another great find. Seven small diamonds.

Next day, a stone as large as a cob-nut, and with strange and beautiful streaks. They carried it home to dinner, and set it on the table, and told the family it was worth a thousand pounds. Bulteel scarcely looked at it; but the vrow trembled and all the young folk glowered at it.

In the middle of dinner, it exploded like a cracker, and went literally into diamond-dust.

'Dere goes von thousand pounds,' said Bulteel, without moving a muscle.

Falcon swore. But Staines showed fortitude. 'It was laminated,' said he, and exposure to the air was fatal.'

Owing to the invaluable assistance of the Hottentots, they had in less than a month collected four large stones of pure water, and a wine-glassful of small stones, when, one fine day, going to work calmly after breakfast, they found some tents pitched, and at least a score of dirty diggers, bearded like the pard, at work on the ground. Staines sent Falcon back to tell Bulteel, and suggest that he should at once order them off, or, better still, make terms with them. The phlegmatic Boer did neither.

In twenty-four hours it was too late. The place was rushed. In other words, diggers swarmed to the spot, with no idea of law but digger's law.

A thousand tents rose like mushrooms; and poor Bulteel stood smoking, and staring amazed, at

his own door, and saw a veritable procession of waggons, Cape carts, and powdered travellers file past him to take possession of his hillocks. Him, the proprietor, they simply ignored; they had a committee, who were to deal with all obstructions, landlords and tenants included. They themselves measured out Bulteel's farm into thirty-foot claims, and went to work with shovel and pick. They held Staines's claim sacred—that was diggers' law; but they confined it strictly to thirty feet square.

Had the friends resisted, their brains would have been knocked out. However, they gained this, that dealers poured in, and the market not being yet glutted, the price was good: Staines sold a few of the small stones for two hundred pounds. He showed one of the larger stones. The dealer's eye glittered, but he offered only three hundred pounds, and this was so wide of the ascending scale, on which a stone of that importance is priced, that Staines reserved it for sale at Cape Town.

Nevertheless, he afterwards doubted whether he had not better have taken it; for the multitude of diggers turned out such a prodigious number of diamonds at Bulteel's pan, that a sort of panic fell on the market.

These dry diggings were a revelation to the world. Men began to think the diamond, perhaps, was a commoner stone than any one had dreamed it to be.

As to the discovery of stones, Staines and Falcon lost nothing by being confined to a thirty-foot claim. Compelled to dig deeper, they got into a rich strata, where they found garnets by the pint, and some small diamonds, and at last, one lucky day, their largest diamond. It weighed thirty-seven carats, and was a rich yellow.

Now, when a diamond is clouded or off colour, it is terribly depreciated; but a diamond with a positive colour is called a fancy stone, and ranks with the purest stones.

'I wish I had this in Cape Town,' said Staines.

'Why I'll take it to Cape Town, if you like,' said the changeable Falcon.

'You will?' said Christopher, surprised.

'Why not? I'm not much of a digger. I can serve our interest better by selling. I could get a thousand pounds for this at Cape Town.'

'We will talk of that quietly,' said Christopher.

Now, the fact is Falcon, as a digger, was not worth a pin. He could not sort. His eyes would not bear the blinding glare of a tropical sun upon lime and dazzling bits of mica, quartz, crystal, white topaz, etc, in the midst of which the true glint of the royal stone had to be caught in a moment. He could not sort, and he had not the heart to dig. The only way to make him earn his half was to turn him into the travelling and selling partner.

Christopher was too generous to tell him this; but he acted on it, and said he thought his was an excellent proposal: indeed he had better take all the diamonds they had got, to Dale's Kloof first, and show them to his wife, for her consolation: 'And perhaps,' said he, 'in a matter of this importance, she will go to Cape Town with you, and try the market there.'

'All right,' said Falcon.

He sat and brooded over the matter a long time, and said, 'Why make two bites of a cherry? They will only give us half the value at Cape Town: why not go by the steamer to England, before

the London market is glutted, and all the world finds out that diamonds are as common as dirt?'

'Go to England! What, without your wife? I'll never be a party to that. Me part man and wife! If you knew my own story——'

'Why, who wants you?' said Reginald. 'You don't understand. Phoebe is dying to visit England again; but she has got no excuse. If you like to give her one, she will be much obliged to you, I can tell you.'

'Oh, that is a very different matter. If Mrs. Falcon can leave her farm ——'

'Oh, that brute of a brother of hers is a very honest fellow, for that matter. She can trust the farm to him. Besides, it is only a month's voyage by the mail steamer.'

This suggestion of Falcon's set Christopher's heart bounding, and his eyes glistening. But he restrained himself, and said, 'This takes me by surprise; let me smoke a pipe over it.'

He not only did that, but he lay awake all night.

The fact is that for some time past, Christopher had felt sharp twinges of conscience, and deep misgivings as to the course he had pursued in leaving his wife a single day in the dark. Complete convalescence had cleared his moral sentiments, and, perhaps, after all, the discovery of the diamonds had co-operated; since now the insurance money was no longer necessary to keep his wife from starving.

'Ah!' said he; 'faith is a great quality; and how I have lacked it!'

To do him justice, he knew his wife's excitable nature, and was not without fears of some disaster, should the news be communicated to her unskillfully.

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But this proposal of Falcon's made the way clearer. Mrs. Falcon, though not a lady, had all a lady's delicacy, and all a woman's tact and tenderness. He knew no one in the world more fit to be trusted with the delicate task of breaking to his Rosa that the grave, for once, was baffled, and her husband lived. He now became quite anxious for Falcon's departure, and ardently hoped that worthy had not deceived himself as to Mrs. Falcon's desire to visit England.

In short, it was settled that Falcon should start for Dale's Kloof, taking with him the diamonds, believed to be worth altogether three thousand pounds at Cape Town, and nearly as much again in England, and a long letter to Mrs. Falcon, in which Staines revealed his true story, told her where to find his wife, or hear of her, viz., at Kent Villa, Gravesend, and sketched an outline of instructions as to the way, and cunning degrees, by which the joyful news should be broken to her. With this he sent a long letter to be given to Rosa herself, but not till she should know all; and in this letter he enclosed the ruby ring she had given him. That ring had never left his finger, by sea or land, in sickness, or health.

The letter to Rosa was sealed. The two letters made quite a packet; for, in the letter to his beloved Rosa, he told her everything that had befallen him. It was a romance, and a picture of love; a letter to lift a loving woman to heaven, and almost reconcile her to all her bereaved heart had suffered.

This letter, written with many tears from the heart that had so suffered, and was now softened by good fortune and bounding with joy, Staines entrusted to Falcon,

together with the other diamonds, and, with many warm shakings of the hand, started him on his way.

'But mind, Falcon,' said Christopher, 'I shall expect an answer from Mrs. Falcon in twenty days at farthest. I do not feel so sure as you do that she wants to go to England; and, if not, I must write to Uncle Philip. Give me your solemn promise, old fellow, an answer in twenty days—if you have to send a Kafir on horse-back.'

'I give you my honour,' said Falcon, superbly.

'Send it to me at Bulteel's Farm.'

'All right. "Dr. Christie, Bulteel's Farm."'

"Well—no. Why should I conceal my real name any longer from such friends as you and your wife? Christie is short for Christopher—that is my Christian name; but my surname is Staines. Write to "Dr. Staines."'

'Doctor Staines!'

'Yes. Did you ever hear of me?'

Falcon wore a strange look. 'I almost think I have. Down at Gravesend, or somewhere.'

'That is curious. Yes, I married my Rosa there; poor thing! God bless her; God comfort her. She thinks me dead.'

His voice trembled, he grasped Falcon's cold hand, till the latter winced again, and so they parted, and Falcon rode off muttering, 'Doctor Staines! so then you are Doctor Staines.'

CHAPTER XXII.

Rosa Staines had youth on her side, and it is an old saying that youth will not be denied. Youth struggled with death for her, and won the battle.

But she came out of that ter-

rible fight weak as a child. The sweet pale face—the widow's cap, the suit of deep black—it was long ere these came down from the sick room. And, when they did, oh, the dead blank! The weary, listless life! The days spent in sighs, and tears, and desolation. Solitude! solitude! Her husband was gone, and a strange woman played the mother to her child before her eyes.

Uncle Philip was devotedly kind to her, and so was her father; but they could do nothing for her.

Months rolled on, and skinned the wound over. Months could not heal. Her boy became dearer and dearer, and it was from him came the first real drops of comfort, however feeble.

She used to read her lost one's diary every day, and worship, in deep sorrow, the mind she had scarcely respected, until it was too late. She searched in this diary to find his will, and often she mourned that he had written or it so few things she could obey. Her desire to obey the dead, whom, living, she had often disobeyed, was really simple and touching. She would mourn to her father that there were so few commands to her in his diary. 'But,' said she, 'memory brings me back his will in many things, and to obey is now the only sad comfort I have.'

It was in this spirit she now forced herself to keep accounts. No fear of her wearing stays now; no powder; no trimmings; no waste.

After the usual delay, her father told her she should instruct a solicitor to apply to the insurance company for the six thousand pounds. She refused with a burst of agony. 'The price of his life,' she screamed. 'Never! I'd live on bread and water sooner than touch that vile money.'

Her father remonstrated gently. But she was immovable. 'No. It would be like consenting to his death.'

Then Uncle Philip was sent for. He set her child on her knee; and gave her a pen. 'Come,' said he, sternly, 'be a woman, and do your duty to little Christie.'

She kissed the boy, cried, and did her duty meekly. But, when the money was brought her, she flew to Uncle Philip, and said, 'There! there!' and threw it all before him, and cried as if her heart would break. He waited patiently, and asked her what he was to do with all that: invest it?

'Yes, yes; for my little Christie.'

'And pay you the interest quarterly.'

'Oh, no, no. Dribble us out a little as we want it. That is the way to be truly kind to a simpleton. I hate that word.'

'And suppose I run off with it? Such confiding geese as you corrupt a man.'

'I shall never corrupt you. Crusty people are the soul of honour.'

'Crusty people!' cried Philip, affecting amazement. 'What are they?'

She bit her lip and coloured a little; but answered adroitly,

'They are people that pretend not to have good hearts, but have the best in the world; far better ones than your smooth ones: that's crusty people.'

'Very well,' said Philip; 'and I'll tell you what simpletons are. They are little transparent-looking creatures that look shallow, but are as deep as old Nick, and make you love them in spite of your judgment. They are the most artful of their sex; for they always achieve its great object, to be loved—the very thing that clever women sometimes fail in.'

'Well, and if we are not to be loved, why live at all—such useless things as I am?' said Rosa simply.

So Philip took charge of her money, and agreed to help her save money for her little Christopher. Poverty should never destroy him, as it had his father.

As months rolled on, she crept out into public a little; but always on foot, and a very little way from home.

Youth and sober life gradually restored her strength, but not her colour, nor her buoyancy.

Yet she was, perhaps, more beautiful than ever; for a holy sorrow chastened and sublimed her features: it was now a sweet, angelic, pensive beauty, that interested every feeling person at a glance.

She would visit no one; but, a twelvemonth after her bereavement, she received a few chosen visitors.

One day a young gentleman called, and sent up his card, 'Lord Tadcaster,' with a note from Lady Cicely Treherne, full of kindly feeling. Uncle Philip had reconciled her to Lady Cicely; but they had never met.

Mrs. Staines was much agitated at the very name of Lord Tadcaster; but she would not have missed seeing him for the world.

She received him, with her beautiful eyes wide open, to drink in every lineament of one who had seen the last of her Christopher.

Tadcaster was wonderfully improved: he had grown six inches out at sea, and, though still short, was not diminutive; he was a small Apollo, a model of symmetry, and had an engaging, girlish beauty, redeemed from downright effeminacy by a golden moustache like silk, and a tanned cheek that became him wonderfully.

He seemed dazzled at first by Mrs. Staines, but murmured that Lady Cicely had told him to come, or he would not have ventured.

'Who can be so welcome to me as you?' said she, and the tears came thick in her eyes directly.

Soon, he hardly knew how, he found himself talking of Staines, and telling her what a favourite he was, and all the clever things he had done.

The tears streamed down her cheeks, but she begged him to go on telling her, and omit nothing.

He complied heartily, and was even so moved by the telling of his friend's virtues, and her tears and sobs, that he mingled his tears with hers. She rewarded him by giving him her hand as she turned away her tearful face to indulge the fresh burst of grief his sympathy evoked.

When he was leaving, she said, in her simple way, 'Bless you.'—'Come again,' she said: 'you have done a poor widow good.'

Lord Tadcaster was so interested and charmed, he would gladly have come back next day to see her; but he restrained that extravagance, and waited a week.

Then he visited her again. He had observed the villa was not rich in flowers, and he took her down a magnificent bouquet, cut from his father's hot-houses. At sight of him, or at sight of it, or both, the colour rose for once in her pale cheek, and her pensive face wore a sweet expression of satisfaction. She took his flowers, and thanked him for them, and for coming to see her.

Soon they got on the only topic she cared for, and, in the course of this second conversation, he took her into his confidence and told her he owed everything to Dr. Staines. 'I was on the wrong road altogether, and he put me right. To tell you the truth, I

used to disobey him now and then, while he was alive, and I was always the worse for it; now he is gone I never disobey him. I have written down a lot of wise, kind things he said to me, and I never go against any one of them. I call it my book of oracles. Dear me, I might have brought it with me.'

'Oh, yes; why didn't you?'—rather reproachfully.

'I will bring it next time.'

'Pray do.'

Then she looked at him with her lovely swimming eyes, and said tenderly, 'And so here is another that disobeyed him living, but obeys him dead. What will you think when I tell you that I, his wife, who now worship him, when it is too late, often thwarted and vexed him when he was alive?'

'No, no. He told me you were an angel, and I believe it.'

'An angel! a good-for-nothing, foolish woman—who sees everything too late.'

'Nobody else should say so before me,' said the little gentleman, grandly. 'I shall take his word before yours on this one subject. If ever there was an angel, you are one, and oh! what would I give if I could but say or do anything in the world to comfort you.'

'You can do nothing for me, dear, but come and see me often, and talk to me as you do—on the one sad theme my broken heart has room for.'

This invitation delighted Lord Tadcaster, and the sweet word 'dear,' from her lovely lips, entered his heart and ran through all his veins like some rapturous but dangerous elixir. He did not say to himself, 'She is a widow with a child, feels old with grief, and looks on me as a boy, who has been kind to her.' Such prudence and wariness were hardly to be expected from his age. He had

admired her at first sight, very nearly loved her at their first interview, and now this sweet word opened a heavenly vista. The generous heart that beat in his small frame burned to console her with a life-long devotion and all the sweet offices of love.

He ordered his yacht to Gravesend—for he had become a sailor—and then he called on Mrs. Staines, and told her, with a sort of sheepish cunning, that now, as his yacht happened to be at Gravesend, he could come and see her very often. He watched her timidly, to see how she would take that proposition.

She said, with the utmost simplicity, 'I'm very glad of it.'

Then he produced his oracles; and she devoured them. Such precepts to Tadcaster as she could apply to her own case she instantly noted in her memory, and they became her law from that moment.

Then, in her simplicity, she said, 'And I will show you some things, in his own hand-writing, that may be good for you: but I can't show you the whole book; some of it is sacred from every eye but his wife's. His wife's? Ah me! his widow's.'

Then she pointed out passages in the diary that she thought might be for his good; and he nestled to her side, and followed her white finger with loving eyes, and was in an Elysium—which she would certainly have put a stop to at that time, had she divined it. But all wisdom does not come at once to an unguarded woman. Rosa Staines was wiser about her husband than she had been, but she had plenty to learn.

Lord Tadcaster anchored off Gravesend, and visited Mrs. Staines nearly every day. She received him with a pleasure that was not at all lively, but quite undisguised.

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He could not doubt his welcome; for once, when he came, she said to the servant, 'Not at home,' a plain proof she did not wish his visit to be cut short by any one else.

And so these visits and devoted attentions of every kind went on unobserved by Lord Tadcaster's friends, because Rosa would never go out, even with him: but, at last, Mr. Lusignan saw plainly how this would end, unless he interfered.

Well, he did not interfere; on the contrary, he was careful to avoid putting his daughter on her guard: he said to himself, 'Lord Tadcaster does her good. I'm afraid she would not marry him, if he was to ask her now; but in time she might. She likes him a great deal better than any one else.'

As for Philip, he was abroad for his own health, somewhat impaired by his long and faithful attendance on Rosa.

So now Lord Tadcaster was in constant attendance on Rosa. She was languid, but gentle and kind; and, as mourners, like invalids, are apt to be egotistical, she saw nothing but that he was a comfort to her in her affliction.

While matters were so, the Earl of Miltshire, who had long been sinking, died, and Tadcaster succeeded to his honours and estates.

Rosa heard of it, and, thinking it was a great bereavement, wrote him one of those exquisite letters of condolence a lady alone can write. He took it to Lady Cicely, and showed it her. She highly approved it.

He said, 'The only thing—it makes me ashamed, I do not feel my poor father's death more; but, you know, it has been so long expected.' Then he was silent a long time; and then he asked her if such a woman as that would

not make him happy, if he could win her.

It was on her ladyship's tongue to say, 'She did not make her first happy;' but she forbore, and said, coldly, that was maw than she could say.

Tadcaster seemed disappointed by that, and by-and-by Cicely took herself to task. She asked herself what were Tadcaster's chances in the lottery of wives. The heavy army of scheming mothers, and the light cavalry of artful daughters, rose before her cousinly and disinterested eyes, and she asked herself what chance poor little Tadcaster would have of catching a true love, with a hundred female artists manœuvring, wheeling, ambuscading, and charging upon his wealth and titles. She returned to the subject of her own accord, and told him she saw but one objection to such a match: the lady had a son by a man of rare merit and misfortune. Could he, at his age, undertake to be a father to that son? 'Othahwise,' said Lady Cicely, 'maak my words, you will quall over that poor child; and you will have two to quall with, because I shall be on her side.'

Tadcaster declared to her that child should be quite the opposite of a bone of contention. 'I have thought of that,' said he, 'and I mean to be so kind to that boy, I shall make her love me for that.'

On these terms Lady Cicely gave her consent.

Then he asked her should he write, or ask her in person.

Lady Cicely reflected. 'If you write, I think she will say no.'

'But if I go?'

'Then it will depend on how you do it. Rosa Staines is a true mourner. Whatever you may think, I don't believe the idea of a second union has ever entered her head. But then she is very

unselfish: and she likes you better than any one else, I daresay. I don't think your title or your money will weigh with her now. But, if you show her your happiness depends on it, she may perhaps cry and sob at the very idea of it, and then, after all, say, "Well, why not—if I can make the poor soul happy?"

So, on this advice, Tadcaster went down to Gravesend, and Lady Cicely felt a certain self-satisfaction; for her well-meant interference having lost Rosa one husband, she was pleased to think she had done something to give her another.

Lord Tadcaster came to Rosa Staines; he found her seated with her head upon her white hand, thinking sadly of the past.

At sight of him in deep mourning, she started, and said 'Oh!'

Then she said, tenderly, 'We are of one colour now,' and gave him her hand.

He sat down beside her, not knowing how to begin.

'I am not Tadcaster now. I am Earl of Miltshire.'

'Ah, yes; I forgot,' said she, indifferently.

'This is my first visit to any one in that character.'

'Thank you.'

'It is an awfully important visit to me. I could not feel myself independent, and able to secure your comfort and little Christie's, without coming to the lady, the only lady I ever saw,

that—oh, Mrs. Staines—Rosa—who could see you, as I have done—mingle his tears with yours, as I have done, and not love you, and long to offer you his love?'

'Love! to me, a broken-hearted woman, with nothing to live for but his memory and his child.'

She looked at him with a sort of scared amazement.

'His child shall be mine. His memory is almost as dear to me as to you.'

'Nonsense, child, nonsense!' said she, almost sternly.

'Was he not my best friend? Should I have the health I enjoy, or even be alive, but for him? Oh, Mrs. Staines—Rosa, you will not live all your life unmarried; and who will love you as I do? You are my first and only love; my happiness depends on you.'

'Your happiness depend on me! Heaven forbid—a woman of my age, that feels so old, old, old.'

'You are not old: you are young, and sad, and beautiful, and my happiness depends on you.' She began to tremble a little. Then he kneeled at her knees, and implored her, and his hot tears fell upon the hand she put out to stop him, while she turned her head away, and the tears began to run.

Oh! never can the cold dissecting pen tell what rushes over the heart that has loved and lost, when another true love first kneels and implores for love, or pity, or anything the bereaved can give.

(To be continued.)



EXTRACTS FROM A TRAVELLING BAG.

BY MAJOR H. BYNG-HALL, AUTHOR OF 'THE BRIC-À-BRAC HUNTER,' &c.

PARLIAMENTARY battles over, London Society—that is to say, the society which our Gaelic neighbours are wont to term the *beau monde*—take wing as the swallow, and fly north, south, east and west, some to the grouse hills of Scotland; others to the noble residences of the aristocracy—their unrivalled English homes; many to enjoy the fresh breezes of the ocean; and thousands, of all classes and professions, to foreign lands, who know little of their own; while many, as winter approaches, settle down for a time in the mis-called 'enchanted capitals of Southern Europe,' watered by the historic, though muddy Tiber, by the sparkling Adriatic Sea, or the ever calm and sunny Mediterranean.

Such, in fact, is the language which I have oftentimes heard expressed with regard to those outwardly fair cities of Southern France and Italy—at least by those who may perchance have lingered there for a brief season under the most agreeable circumstances, as during the finest weather. And they speak at the time words of truth, for such has been the impression left on their minds by that which they have seen; and such, indeed, are the opinions of travellers in general, when no untoward circumstance causes them to alter their opinions.

A well-cooked dinner, a cheerful room, a soft bed, a good breakfast, fair weather and health, civility and moderate charges, send away a guest charmed with his host and his hotel. The same hotel is visited under very different circumstances, and he who suffers from them condemns it for ever.

So is it with most things in active life. A good luncheon, and well-cooked mutton-chop, according to the taste of the eater; a good appetite at a buffet, at home or abroad, stamp, in the opinion of those so fortunate as to obtain it, the place and its productions.

Now, let us be just and truthful; let us take the rough with the smooth; let us look on places and people, not with the eye of prejudice and preference, but in fairness, untouched by romance. The ways of the world are oftentimes hard to decipher; yet this life is not always overcast, nor are all the seas of the South for ever calm.

For my part, I am only a hard-worked traveller from the rich and well-known commercial house of Downing and Co., general merchants, who have agents all over Europe, and relations of great importance with most capitals.

Old Downing, under whom I first served long years since, was one of the most kind, generous-minded, and liberal of masters. Alas! he is dead; but not forgotten by those he befriended. Young Downing, his successor, is no doubt clever and gentlemanlike, always well-dressed and polite; but he scarcely takes much interest in the travellers of his house, however great their labours, responsibilities, or physical sufferings; for he it known they are sent with orders during all times and seasons, over rough seas, and snow-clad mountains, braving the heats of Southern Europe, as the cold of Russia. Christmas Day, Good Friday, New Year's Day, or Black Monday, the interests of the house must be attended to, *coûte qu'il coûte*.

I make these observations in all

courtesy, being alive to the fact that my humble position, notwithstanding my long service, scarcely admits the slightest reference to my superiors. My desire is simply to show my readers that, for years, my duties to this great house have called me to every capital in Europe, as well as to various places which are not precisely capitals; my statements, therefore, as regards places and persons in general and particular, may be considered as practical and true, my principal object being the endeavour to convince my countrymen that the sun does not shine for ever out of England; that southern seas are not always calm; that flowers wither abroad, as at home; and that, take it for all in all, there is no climate throughout the year like that of Old England; no country where a man of moderate desires can live so cheaply, notwithstanding the present high price of food: in fact, there is no place like home. True that, in the month of late October, I have steamed in one of the vessels then, if I am not in error, named the '*Messagerie Impériale*,' and now, I believe, entitled to the name of '*Messagerie Nationale*,' from Marseilles to Constantinople. Throughout the voyage, the sea was as calm as a mill-pond, the weather as warm as July; and, to those who love the sea—which I do not, save to look at, and bathe in, and eat fish from, though I never suffer, as many do, from its dire effects—the voyage, on its termination, as we glided past the Seraglio Point, and anchored in front of the city of the Sultan at sunrise, and beheld a scene which I must admit, under such circumstances, is one of brilliancy and beauty, would have been termed delightful.

And yet, though in midsummer time I have met with calm seas

and sunshine, during the spring and winter, storms and seas more boisterous than those of the Atlantic or Bay of Biscay have assailed us: but let that pass.

I am now about to give a little *historiette* of a recent journey from the city of Victoria to that of Abdul Azzis, for the benefit of those desirous of visiting Constantinople at this season of the year. If dear old Downing were alive—God bless his memory!—he would have asked me to tell him, as he was wont, all about it; and having so told him, he would have said, 'Well, my boy, you shall be recompensed for your sufferings and dangers, if pecuniary recompense can soften their recollection, and add to the comforts of those who love you and mourned your absence.'

The night of my leaving England was one of dark and late November gloom; heavy rain was falling, as it had fallen several days previous, while almost a hurricane had blown throughout the week, and the Press was full of disasters by sea on the coast of England. Meanwhile, though I confess my ignorance of financial movements, I was aware, as all men ought to be, of things general and particular, that the Bank rate had risen—which has, I believe, a sort of barometrical effect on commercial affairs. Thiers had, also, again announced his intended resignation, if not allowed to do as he liked. Paris was in a fever; Republicans, Legitimists, Bonapartists, Radicals and Communists—meaning in some way or another, I conclude, though difficult for a humble commercial traveller to comprehend, peace, plenty, and the good of their country, or pillage and incendiarism—were alive to coming events, when I was requested—which means commanded—to take some documents

doubtless of great importance, to the agent of Downing and Co. at Constantinople.

I confess my baggage was lighter than my heart, when, leaving home with Christmas in the advent, I put my pipe in my pocket—never forget your pipe, and a good supply of bird's-eye, when travelling,—bade adieu to my favourite cat, said good-night to Downing and Co., who wished me a 'pleasant' journey, as he smilingly went home, doubtless to a *recherché* dinner; and at 8.45 found myself *en route* for Dover. Ere I proceed, however, permit me to remark—I do so, not from ill-nature, but the public good,—that the buffet, or refreshment-room at the Charing Cross station*—I say nothing of the hotel, having never ate, drank, or slept therein—is one of the worst in Europe. Everything is bad or indifferent; served, doubtless, by most respectable females, mis-called 'young ladies,' continually changed or changing, who stare, and flirt with equally improperly called 'young gentlemen,' neglecting—at times almost ignoring—those who desire to be served, superintended by a middle-aged, stout, and amiable duenna, with her gold watch and chain, who may be generally seen partaking of a good lunch or dinner, and neglecting the young ladies under her charge. The buffet at Dover, also, though improved of late, is justly pronounced by foreigners

* I find, in a very pleasant article in the 'Saturday Review,' that the writer, speaking of 'bars,' or restaurants, as a matrimonial market, states that, for the most part, the 'sandwiches and pork-pies' are the same as they used to be—as related by Dickens in his description of Mugby Junction—terminating his witty and truthful article by saying, 'That a man who gets a good wife from among the young women who serve at the bar, need not complain of a bad pork-pie, whatever others may be inclined to do.'

who arrive cold and sick on the shores of Old England as a disgrace.

Paris to Marseilles—whither I arrived in twenty-two hours, instead of sixteen as heretofore,—is a journey too well known to need comment. Arrived, once more I went on board one of the 'Messagerie Nationale' steamers, as they are now called, *en route* for the city of the Sultan, *via* Naples.

The night was dark, wet, and windy, and as I stood on the deck of the fine vessel, my pipe in my mouth, my thoughts far away—they rest, but 'who cares?'—first on my home and my cat, and then on the responsible charge intrusted to me by the house of Downing and Co.—it was, in fact, such a night as a man's thoughts, spite of his faith in his Redeemer, will fly back to home and those he loves, if he has a heart, though I doubt if a traveller to a commercial house of any dignity should have a heart.

We passed through the narrow entrance to the port called La Joliette, steamed passed the Château d'If, and soon put up the helm for Naples in the open sea. As I looked around me, and hearing the vessel named 'Le Tage,' the old song crossed my memory, 'Fleuve du Tage,'—

'Je quitte tes bords heureux;'

and I ardently wished myself on shore again, when I was aroused from my reverie by a most polite garçon, who informed me that dinner was served. Dinner? yes, I will go to dinner, suffering from mind and thought, not from the roughness of the sea. 'Which is the worst, to be sick at heart or sick in the stomach?' Let those who have suffered both answer the question. So to dinner I went. Could some of those who are for ever vaunting the soft breezes of the South and the calm Medi-

terranean, have witnessed the subdued faces of most of those who sat around the board—or who endeavoured to sit and prevent their soup falling into their laps, now to save a bottle, now to save themselves, putting on an appearance of courage and contentment which they did not possess—I think many who leave a winter in old England for that of Southern France or Italy would remain at home at ease. However, we dined as best we could. The dinner card I enclose. The menu looks well on paper:—

Potage.
Pâte d'Italie.
Relève.
Côtelettes d'agneau.
Milanese.
Entrées.
Poisson à la Hollandaise.
Filet de bœuf aux champignons.
Rôti.
Bécasses.
Salade.
Légumes.
Petits Pois.
Entremet.
Beignet soufflé.
Dessert.

It would have looked far better on a damask table-cloth in a comfortable room ashore, instead of in a steamer's saloon with a tempestuous sea; and, indeed, it would have been excellent if properly cooked. By my side sat, or endeavoured to sit, a young English officer *en route* to enjoy two months' leave of absence—a very pleasant companion, who had never previously been abroad. I was glad to make his acquaintance. He held out bravely, whereas scarcely another person remained ten minutes at table, but rushed to their cabins, and never appeared again that wretched night. After undergoing all the miseries of a gale of wind for two days and three nights, we at length reached Naples; and I may

here remark, that the vessels of the 'Messageries Nationales,' or Impériales, or whatever their cognomen, handsome as they are, are far better to look at than to sail in, as they appear to me to be made only for fair weather, as are houses built, and everything else in the South, as if the sun shined for ever, the wind never blew, and the sea was eternally calm; moreover, although they carry mails and passengers who pay on or about the same price from Marseilles to Constantinople as from Liverpool to New York—in fact, more in comparison to time and distance—every one and everything is lost sight of for commercial gain and merchandise. Our captain was a kind and gallant officer who had previously served in the navy, and his officers did their duty calmly and well, considering the weather. But what, at times, can the care of the best of captains, officers, and engineers do against a hurricane, even on the so-called calm Mediterranean?

Thanks be to God, we are at length anchored safely in the unsafe harbour of Naples; some of the passengers who had never previously visited that bay, renowned for its undoubted beauty, looked anxiously towards Mount Vesuvius and the castle heights. But, alas! Vesuvius, though in good humour, was hid from view by dark clouds and fog thick enough for London to be proud of, and possibly to convince foreigners that there are fogs out of England. Moreover, the wind blew, and the waves, even of a tideless sea, broke on the shore with boisterous sounds. Comparatively safe and snug as we found ourselves, after an unusually long voyage from Marseilles, but little respite was allowed, for although many of us managed to get on shore, it was not without danger and difficulty

that we returned to the ship; indeed, some of the passengers decided on remaining entirely on dry land; particularly a Russian gentleman and his young wife—a newly married couple, I fancy—who had intended to visit Athens and Constantinople, thence proceeding to Odessa, declared that nothing should induce them to go to sea again after the agonies they had suffered.

Downing and Co., however, who live at home at ease, pay slight attention to the dangers of the seas. For my part, therefore, a humble traveller from their house, I could only, in vulgar phraseology, 'grin and bear it,'—though in my heart of hearts I did most fondly hope our gallant captain would suppress his ardour and anxiety to proceed on his voyage, with the knowledge that seventy or eighty lives were possibly of more importance than the oil and merchandise, peculiar cocks and hens and parrots, which, together with the mails, he was conveying to Constantinople and the Sultan.

Alas! our hopes for a quiet night were speedily at an end: click went the windlass, sharply whistled the wind. I endeavoured to smoke my pipe, ordered a little hot brandy-and-water, and affected a calmness I most unquestionably did not feel.

'You smoke and put on a cheerful face,' said a very pleasant, Greek gentleman from London; 'but Englishmen are good sailors.'

'Good sailors or not,' I replied, 'we have been so knocked about for the last three nights, that I would remain here for this, moreover, assured am I, that we have worse weather ahead; but to question the calculations of the commander of his own ship is as unwise as to contradict your wife, if you have one. Take my word,

however, we are in for it; call for a glass of brandy-and-water, hot, with—, and think as little of it as I do; put your trust in God; He knows,' said I to myself, 'how much thought dwells on those I have left at home;' for, although it was not the first time by fifty I had been at sea, truth, that precious word, told me I was disheartened. I admit it; and so would you, readers of the 'London Society,' if you had been out that night on board the 'Tage' which subsequently became a 'fleuve.'

The anchor is up, the night dark and tempestuous, still the sea for a time was endurable; but no sooner had we passed between the islands of Ischia and Capri, than a hurricane arose, such as I have never previously beheld on the Mediterranean, and never wish to feel again. Nevertheless, we pushed on through the night.

Alas! what a night! The gale, that is the hurricane, blew on to a lee shore—the waves, mountains high, overwhelming us, even penetrating the saloon; our speed, two knots an hour. Having vainly endeavoured to rest, I crept out of my cabin, not hanging by my eyelids, but every fixture at hand, in order to ascertain the time, which marked 3.30 A.M. The ship was then pitching, rolling, groaning, and shivering as if every part of it would fly asunder; so, creeping back, I endeavoured once more to repose, but in vain; may be overcome, however, by fatigue—for nothing is more fatiguing than a heavy sea—I dozed for a time. A fearful crash, however, which sent everything flying, smashed the crockery in the steward's cabin, sent portmanteaus and passengers' belongings floating into the main saloon, induced me once more to rise, as best I could—it was then 5 A.M.—and I endeavoured to make my

way to the main deck. How frightful, yet how splendid the scene! the sea, mountains high, now flooding the decks, now breaking against the vessel's side; and yet I thought, and justly so, the ship, though rolling fearfully, was more at ease. Returning with difficulty to the saloon, I found my travelling companion, the Greek, and another gentleman, firmly fixed between the saloon-table and the only seat allowed for passengers on these so-called splendid vessels, endeavouring, by the aid of a spirit-lamp, to heat some coffee to which a small quantity of alcohol was wisely added; and of which they kindly proposed I should partake, to which I readily consented.

'Colonello meo,' said the Greek, 'we have had a spiteful night; happily the dawn is at hand. Let us smoke a pipe. The ship rolls heavily, but more smoothly; let us hope the worst is past.'

'I fear not,' replied his companion; 'our course is changed; the sea is as heavy, if not more so, than ever; we are doubtless running before the wind. Here is a compass; our course is south; we are going north; we may be pooped.'

On hearing this extremely agreeable assertion, I crept once more to the entrance of the deck, and true enough, we had changed our course, which accounted for the fearful battering the vessel had received, as I believe, being in great danger; a portion of the bulwarks having been driven in and her deck flush to the waves of the sea. The scene, if one of splendour, was not less fearful to look at: the crest of the waves, which followed us rapidly, appeared each moment as about to engulf us; but thanks to a merciful Providence, about mid-day we got into the Bay of Castella-

mare. We might, however, as well have remained in the open sea, for the hurricane still continued; and although we cast out two anchors, they would not hold. Towards the afternoon, however, the wind somewhat abated, and we crept across to Naples—from whence I telegraphed to Downing and Co., expressing my regret that the elements had detained me, hoping they would believe I had no control over them; also that my Sunday coat, best boots, and some valuable MSS. were destroyed. The reply was a telegram: 'We hope the papers to which you allude were personal property, and not those in which you were charged for the house.'

After a night's, and the best part of a day's tolerable repose in what was always the indifferently protected harbour of Naples, in which a Turkish and American frigate lay near us, the captain gave the order for getting under way again. Previous to starting, however, let me tell my readers that the memory of that visit to Naples, where on many and many occasions I had passed days, and even weeks, under a blue sky and calm weather, will never be obliterated from my mind. The light-house, to mark the entrance to the harbour, had been utterly cast away by the storm of the previous night, and, sad to relate, many living souls perished therein. The whole of the mole, which had been built at an enormous expense, and which for thirty years had stood firm against the storms of winter, which, if not lasting, rage at times in the Mediterranean, was swept away as if it had been formed of reeds; while, both at Castellamare and Naples, the fearful wreck of coasting vessels, boats, and property was fearful. Indeed, the sight was one to create deep sorrow in the heart that

looked upon it; and when I add that the tideless ocean broke even into the garden of the Villa Real, those who know it, and they are legion, will be enabled to form some judgment of what a hurricane is when raging on the placid Mediterranean.

But we are off again, with renewed hopes and fairer weather. A tolerably calm night—calm, I may say, to one who suffers not from the sea—and sleep, the best restorer to mind and body granted by a merciful God, brought all on deck, ere the sun had been long on the horizon, with thankful hearts and renewed spirits, to welcome one of the most glorious mornings I ever beheld, even in the South—a clear blue sky, a calm blue sea, the interesting Straits of Messina, a league before us Stromboli, and the Lipari Islands standing out clear from the ocean, Etna, snow-capped, without cloud or mist to intercept the distant view—in fact, precisely one of those mornings which, even in mid-winter, are not seldom to be met with in southern climes, and which lead those of old England and elsewhere to believe it is ever so. The weather continuing glorious, the sea calm as a mill-pond, with a sun warm as July, it was pleasant to behold the cheerful faces gathered on the deck: where some of them emerged from it would be difficult to say; whether they had been concealed in the hold or where, who can say? Among these were five or six sisters of charity—whom I always consider, in the majority, an honour to their sex—who had brought out their prayer-books, and knitting, and were working on deck, in the full enjoyment of the sunshine and the calm. I was informed that French sailors are superstitious, and by no means regard either priests or sisters of charity pleasantly on board ship;

at all events, I was told that during the tempest we had happily passed through they had prayed, and fervently, to some well-loved saint—who he was I know not, and I confess to have not a tittle of regard for saints—but I have no doubt, through whatever medium they prayed, their prayers, if from the heart, were heard. At all events, from the hour we quitted the Straits of Messina till that of our arrival in the harbour of the Princes, the weather and the comfort of our voyage did much to compensate us for what we had previously suffered. Bright and beautiful was the morning of our arrival; and as we lay for a few hours in that excellent harbour, surrounded by vessels of war from many nations during our short stay, we had the good fortune to witness a very pleasant and, I may add, pretty scene; for his Majesty the King of Greece and his amiable queen, with a very small escort, embarked at the early hour of 8.30 on board a Greek man-of-war for Corinth, whither they shortly proceeded to meet the uncle of the king, who had come from Denmark on a visit to the Grecian court; consequently, the ships were manned, decorated, salutes fired, and bands played; and without prejudice or affectation, I am compelled to assert that the remarkable quickness of the men on board an English corvette surpassed all those of France, Russia, or Greece. Having ascended from their barge on board the royal iron-clad—a handsome vessel, if iron-clads can ever be termed handsome—both king and queen, plainly dressed, and with the most perfect courtesy and simplicity and goodness, stood on the main deck, and bowed repeatedly to those gathered around the ship to see them depart. The moment

they were under way, orders were given for us to start again, which we did, with a bright sky above and a calm sea below; and, as we steamed rapidly onwards, we were again gratified by the sight of a division of the French fleet, consisting of five iron-clads, on their way to the Piræus, which passed us in the Ægean Sea. Thus favoured by wind and weather, we entered the Dardanelles early the following morning, and soon after sunset dropped our anchor at the entrance of the Golden Horn, thankful to God, who had saved us from the dangers of the sea, and equally thankful for the splendid contrast of the weather during the last few days of our voyage.

The Turkish authorities, having due respect for Downing and Co., permitted their agent to land at once, though such is not usually

the case as regards passengers. They appeared thankful, however, at the arrival of the mail steamer, which many believed had been lost. Glad I was to deliver my charge and once more lay my head on a soft pillow in an airy room, after the tossing and danger we had experienced.

If this simple, but truthful journal from my travelling bag should interest those who desire to visit the East, I shall be happy to give them a fresh, but not uninteresting, account of a journey homewards *vid* the lonely Island of Corfu, Brindisi, Bologna, the Mont Cenis Tunnel, to Paris and old England, to enjoy that which I never expected—a calm Christmas among loved ones at home, forgetful of the discomfort of the past, and looking forward with courage to the future.

BEFORE THE GLASS.

HER maiden twines the rainbow pearls
 About her golden hair,
 While loosely yet some wayward curls
 Caress her forehead fair;
 Then clasps around her graceful throat
 More pearls on velvet warm:
 Ah! never yet did white robes float
 About so sweet a form.

She rises; towards the mirror tall
 She turns her satined feet,
 Her glances quickly rise and fall,
 So fair a sight to meet;
 The gentle blushes come and go
 As eyelids droop and lift,
 For, ah! she cannot choose but know
 She has the fatal gift.

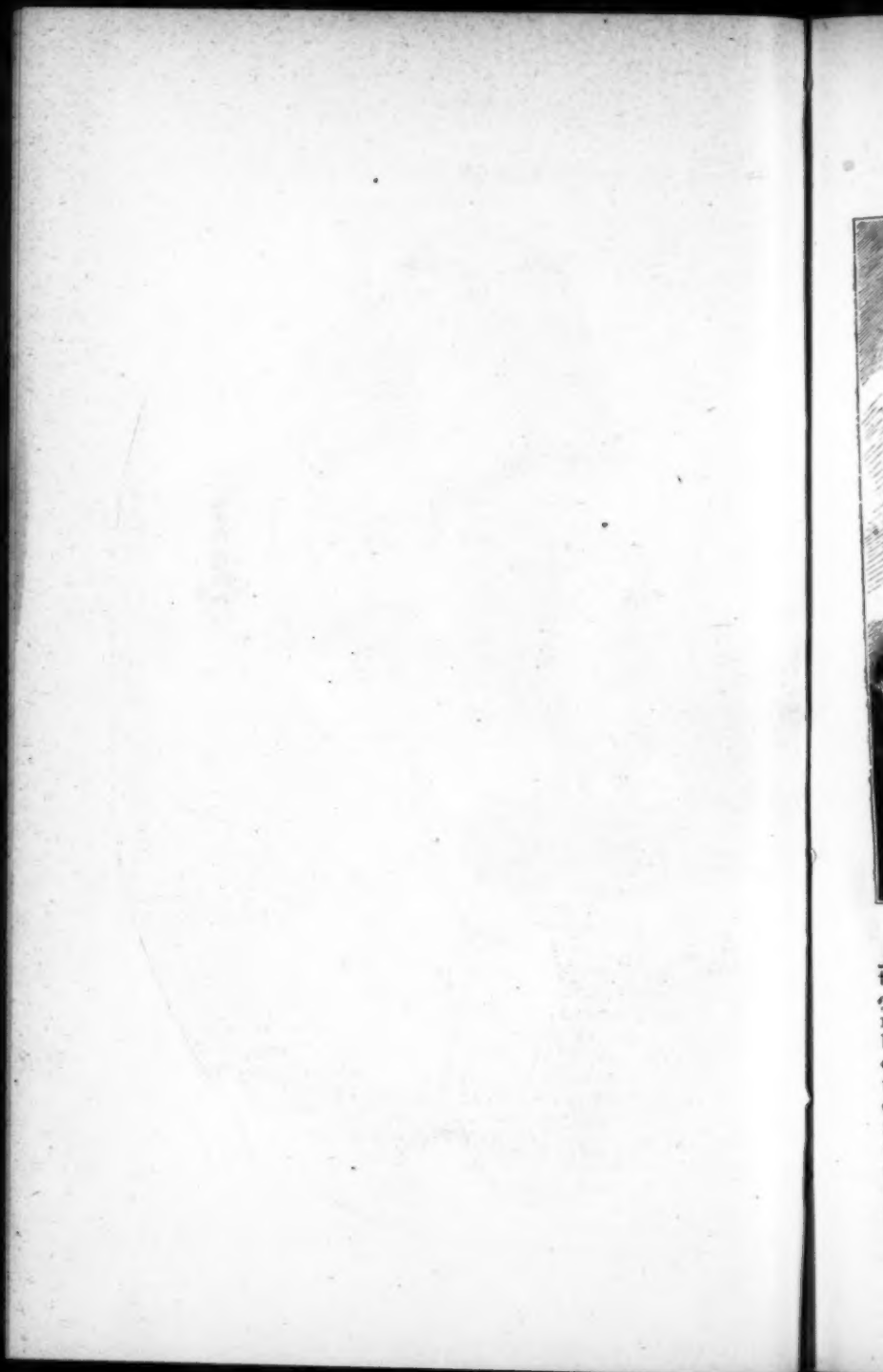
Will knowledge make her wise in time,
 And teach her that her dower
 Is fruitful source of many a crime,
 Has victims every hour?
 Go, Ethel, win in beauty's race,
 Remembering ere you start,
 Unlovely is the loveliest face
 That hides a truthless heart.

CHARLES LAWRENCE YOUNG.

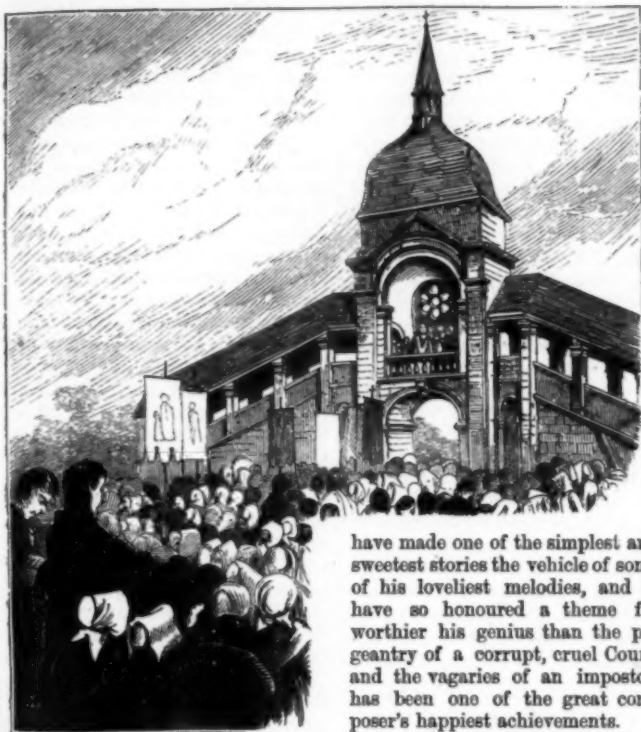


Drawn by R. Newcombe.]

"BEFORE THE GLASS."



SOME THOUGHTS ON BRETON PARDONS.



ASSUREDLY the sweetest opera of Meyerbeer is that known to 'London Society' by the name of the heroine of the story—*Dinorah*. That sweet music seems to breathe all the pathos and poesy of the Breton character: a character which is stamped on all they do—their religious gatherings, and festivals, and political organizations, no less than in their simple duties and daily life. To have caught this poetry of their nature and the manner of its expression; to have put it before us under a form at once popular and attractive; to

have made one of the simplest and sweetest stories the vehicle of some of his loveliest melodies, and to have so honoured a theme far worthier his genius than the pagantry of a corrupt, cruel Court, and the vagaries of an impostor, has been one of the great composer's happiest achievements.

We are wearied with the clash of orchestra, the braying of trumpets, the pomp and circumstance of the 'spectacle' opera—'Jean of Leyden' and his inevitable March. We are shocked and scandalized beyond measure at those naughty nuns who, in a metempsychosis, let us hope, unknown to any system of theology, suddenly develop into blooming coryphées—or perhaps for wearing very short hair, and very long gowns, and very high neck-gear in this life, are doomed to wear very long hair, and very short gowns, and to appear *affreusement décolletées* in another.

We are palled by that ghastly array of coffins seen through an open door to the accompaniment of dying shrieks, while a lady and gentleman have recognised in each other a fond parent and a long lost son, under circumstances even more unusual than those under which a certain old lady identified her first-born by feeling the tips of his ears—he lying in a dark room, having gone to bed in his clothes. We have not yet heard, at least in London, ‘Lohengrin;’ besides, I am speaking of the music of the past, not of the future, to which I believe M. Wagner’s work belongs—and this by the way, without any uncharitable *double-entendre* in regard of Mr. Gye’s promises for last season. And then that dreadful struggle which concludes that finest, most glorious and splendid of all operas, and which I confess I never could understand, unless Mozart thought (as, indeed, he well might) that beyond his exquisite harmonies it was impossible to go, in a way ‘après lui le déluge’ ‘chaos’ should ‘come again,’ and society, after listening to ‘Il mio tesoro,’ or ‘Vedrai carino,’ might go to roost for ever:

‘The dead shall live, the living die,
And music shall untune the sky.’

Well, after all this, I say the story and the sweet music of ‘Dinorah’ is very refreshing; and if we are not wholly absorbed by the pathetic tale of the heroine, it is all because of the freshness of the music, its thrilling harmonies and cadences, and the brief insight we are given into the ways of a simple and interesting people. For, doubtless, few who have had the good fortune to visit and to carry away not a few pleasant recollections from that old-world country will listen to Meyerbeer’s charming melodies without reminiscences to which the sweet ‘Shadow Dance’

may be a fitting echo. But I wonder how many who are familiar with the opera, ever think that the ‘Pardon de Ploermel’ is a living reality in this prosaic nineteenth century of ours, and, indeed, many another ‘Pardon’ too; that the simple folk in their quaint national costume, the picturesque procession, are still to be seen, and that half-sad cadence of the popular hymns is still to be heard in the length and breadth of the Bas Bretagne; and I must say—*crede experto*—the reality is far, far more touching, more beautiful than its representation could ever be.

And so, after the noise and bustle of town life; the wear-and-tear of business; the excitement of artificial enjoyments—whereof one has said that ‘life would be endurable but for its amusements,’—out of the dust, and heat, and din of the City; out of the crowded atmosphere of ‘society,’ where better to take refuge than in some quiet, out-of-the-world village in Brittany, living among its people, observing them, drawing what lessons we might from them, and joining all we could in their simple but hearty festivities?

Now the Breton people is essentially a religious people. I do not mean that they are for ever singing psalms, or always saying their prayers, or even always going to church—though they do a fair amount in that way; nor, again, that they are, as a people, utterly free from all manner of vice, though I must confess they will pass muster on most counts. But their religion is with them a matter of national tradition and observance, and is mixed up with everything they do. Their political principles are biassed by their religious opinions; their loyalty is the outcome of their faith; and we have seen that when they have risen, it has been in a species of

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religious warfare. The ancient faith of his fathers is to the Breton a family heirloom and a national possession. He is as proud of it as he is of the 'Kriesker,'* like which, it seems to him ever to point heavenward; and it is immovable and enduring as the Menhir of his beloved fatherland. Hence it is that their popular festivities occur simultaneously with the festivals of the Church, and are combined with these latter. These are the famous Pilgrimages or 'Pardons.' This latter title they derive from the 'Indulgence' (or communication of those spiritual favours and graces of which the Roman Church claims to be the custos, in the form of a 'Pardon,' or remission of ancient canonical penance), which is offered to all who attend devoutly these festivals. As the observance of confession, and the reception of the Sacrament, are held to be essential to obtaining the spiritual benefits of an 'Indulgence,' it is evident that the original intention of these 'Pardons' recurring at stated intervals, must have been—at least, so far as their religious part is concerned—akin to the spirit in which, some few years back, certain London clergymen conceived, and carried out, the idea of the 'Twelve-days' Mission.' In fact, a sort of general mending of morals and furbishing-up of good resolutions: and that by way of a merry popular festival, to the tune of a rustic dance and the tune—if tune it may be called—of an Armorican 'Binion.'

As far as I am aware, the Pardons take place chiefly about the months of July and August, though there are some, I believe, during the month of May; and last December, the bishops of Brittany,

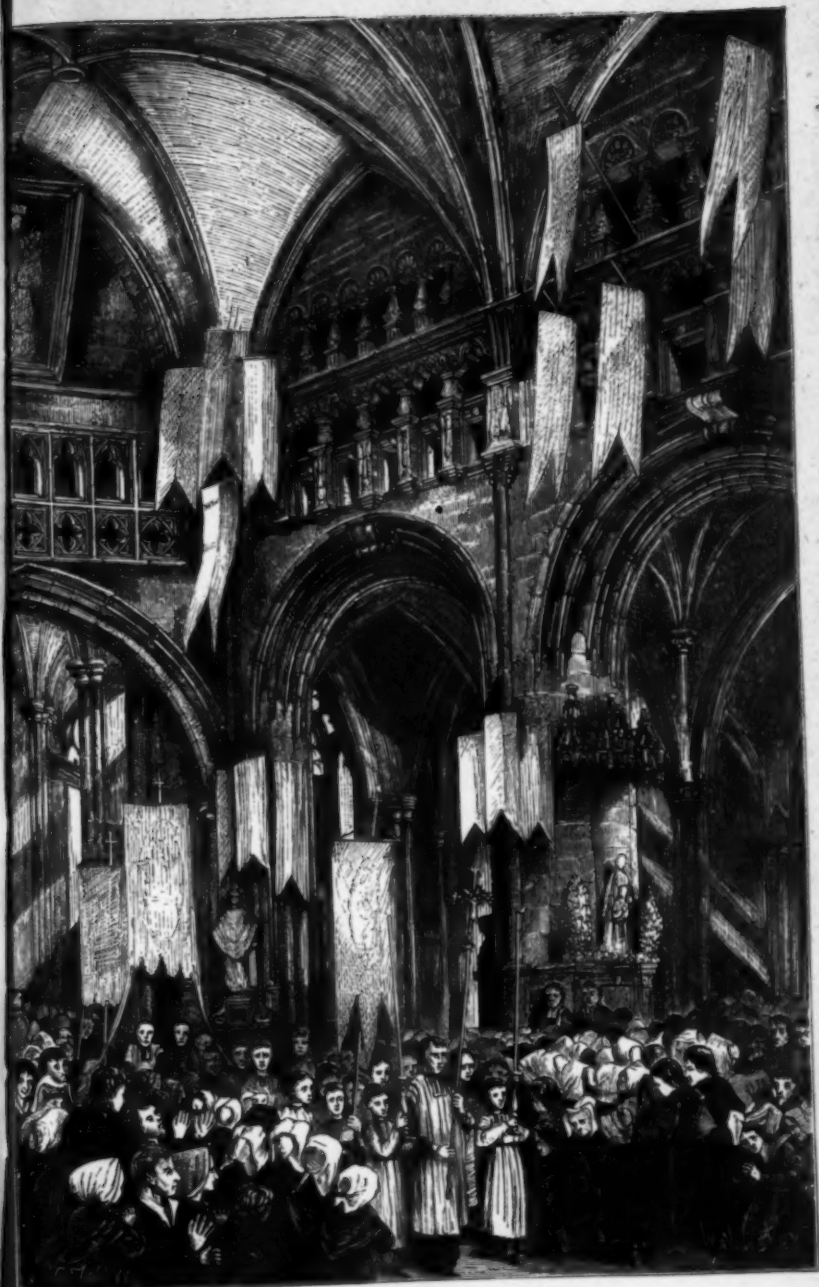
unwilling to be behind their brethren in prayers for the good of the nation, organised a great pilgrimage to Sainte Anne d'Auray, at which over ten thousand pilgrims assisted. They are very similar in character and general idea; so that I may content myself with a few notes on the more celebrated, in order to give my readers a general idea of what they are like; for it is especially at these Pardons, if we wish really to study them, that we should see the Bretons. The Pardons of Guingamp, Sainte Anne de la Palue, and Sainte Anne d'Auray, are the chief ones; the latter, however, being the most celebrated and most numerous attended. It is in a way central to the whole of Brittany, as the others are of their respective districts, to which they serve as the models and types of the lesser Pardons. Beside these, the Pardons of St. Jean du Doigt of Moncoutour, of Ploermel, and Le Folgoet are exceedingly well worth a visit, particularly the latter; where an extremely lovely legend, eminently poetical and Breton, has been the cause of a most beautiful and wonderful church rising amid the most desolate of moorlands conceivable.

Many of my readers will be familiar with the Pardon of Guingamp, from some entertaining articles on the subject which appeared, some two years back, in the 'Standard,' among their author's most 'happy thoughts.' I cannot, however, pass over altogether, in a notice of the Breton Pardons, that of 'Madame Marie of Good Help, at Guingamp, Madame Marie, the fairest star in the firmament.' And also because the interior of the beautiful and singular church where it takes place forms the subject of my picture. I will briefly recapitulate what has been far better said by others. The

* The 'Kriesker' is a famous spire at St. Pol de Leon, of great height and beauty. The word signifies 'Middle Town.'

Pardon commences on the Saturday immediately preceding the first Sunday in July. The square, an irregular but picturesque open space in the centre of the town, surrounded by tall gabled houses, many with curiously-carved fronts, many of great antiquity, and black with age, is decorated in honour of the festival and in preparation for the procession which makes the tour of the 'Place' before entering the shrine of Notre Dame de Bon Secours. Three tall masts bearing on an escutcheon the name of Mary, or one of her titles, have been erected at intervals. At their bases are piled huge bonfires, which are lit during the festivities, and which serve to augment the general illumination. This, I must own, with the writer of the 'Standard,' was not quite up to the mark; but I cannot share his views as to the decoration within the church. This appeared to me particularly effective. The slender garlands of lamps, the trophies of gay-coloured streamers and wreaths of green were admirably disposed; and though I have ventured in my sketch to remove some of the party-coloured bannerets which depended from the upper arcades of the nave, in order to show the rich and beautiful character of the architecture, the effect of their tiers of delicate pink and white drapery—in contrast to the solemn grey hue of the stone-work, was most telling. Above the chancel arch was the 'Atchivement' of the reigning pope, 'Mastai' quartering 'Ferretti,' with the well-known symbol of the cross-keys, and above the triple tiara and beneath a scroll with the words, 'Au Pontife Infaillible,—Respect—Soumission—Obéissance.' The church is full of rich furniture of an artistic character, and the light falls through its vista of arches

and slender columns from some of the finest stained glass I have ever seen. The effect, when the vast naves and aisles were filled with a silent crowd of worshippers, and the sunlight stole in through the painted windows across the incense-laden air, was impressive in a high degree. A fair is held in the square during the Pardon and a merry sight it is. At nine, however, in the evening, the long procession starts from the church, the pilgrims, near six thousand in number, take part in it, bearing lighted tapers; the typical ship is carried by sailors, and there is the usual array of banners: from this moment the religious festival commences. The pilgrims, who not unfrequently have travelled a distance to attend the Pardon, may be seen in crowds on their knees in prayer, or sitting quietly on the steps of our Lady's Chapel, until far into the night. Meanwhile, within the church, confessions are being heard. Early in the morning, before, I am forced to own, most tourists are out of bed, mass is celebrated, and the pilgrims receive the Holy Communion; the remainder of the day is spent in quiet recreation or in the church. Before I leave the subject of Guingamp, a word as to its extraordinary and beautiful church. It was originally one of five, its sister churches having fallen a prey to the fury of the Revolutionary party in 1789. It is in several styles, portions of it dating as early as the thirteenth century. It owes its splendour and importance, however, to Pierre II., Seigneur de Guingamp, the husband of the 'Bienheureuse' Françoise d'Amboise, who, in the fifteenth century, was the superior of the 'Frérie Blanche,' a pious association, who were the guardians of



Drawn by C. Turner.]

"INTERIOR OF GUINGAMP CATHEDRAL."

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the chapelle or venerable image of Notre Dame de Bon Secours. These worthies chose as their ensign a triple cord knotted, with the device—

'Fan tri neud a vec'h ez torrer';

which, for the uninitiated, I translate freely, that, 'a triple cord is hardly broken;' the triple cord being intended to symbolise the three orders of the nation, to wit, the clergy, the nobility, and the people. In his charming life of 'Françoise d'Amboise,' M. le Vicomte de Kersabiec tells us that hither to Guingamp, in January 1443, Pierre de Guingamp brought his gentle and saintly princess; and that he made a foundation, in the words of the old chronicle, 'Affin d'estre participant aux bien faictz pardons et prieres qui chasque jour se font en la ditte chapelle pour le salut de son alme pour ces causes et aultres a luy mouvant.' Françoise d'Amboise was, on her mother's side, of royal Breton descent; but it is to the period of a much greater Lady of Brittany, and probably to her munificence, that we must attribute much of the splendour of Notre Dame de Guingamp. To the age of Anne of Brittany belong the arches and curious 'triforia' seen in my sketch, on the southern side of the nave. The western portal, too, belongs to her time, and is a marvel of richness and sculpture. The situation of Guingamp is delightful. Mr. Jephson, in his entertaining 'Walking Tour in Brittany,' gracefully describes it as 'a brilliant set in a carcanet of emerald and gold.'

About twelve miles from Châteaulin is Plouvenez-Portzay, near which is the shrine of Sainte Anne de la Palue. The present church is a modern erection, but the pilgrimage is of great antiquity: indeed, its exact origin is unknown,

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though the peasants are wont to say of their Sainte Anne, 'Elle est la mère de sainte Anne d'Auray, aussi elle est bien plus puissante.' But this, I own, is a flight of the imagination suggesting an hypothesis which transcends even the limits of the miraculous. There is a famous American combination (where else could such an idea originate?) by which a man legally becomes his own grandfather; but to be one's own mother would exceed the powers—pace the good folk of Finisterre—of Sainte Anne de la Palue. The Pardon here takes place on the last Sunday in August, and begins, as usual with the great procession, on the preceding evening. The scene of the pilgrimage being much more rural, the festivities are quite of an out-door character, the camping out of the pilgrims being an especial feature. It is said, too, that here are to be seen the most complete and finest array of the ancient national Breton costume, as the districts where the patriotic manners and customs are most firmly rooted always muster in great numbers at the Pardon of Sainte Anne de la Palue.

The author of that splendid work, 'La Bretagne Contemporaine,' thus describes the scene:—

'Le soir l'aspect change. Les pèlerins, ayant accompli leurs vœux à plus d'une sorte et fait à genoux nus le tour de la chapelle, campent sous une multitude de tentes. Rien de plus propre à exalter l'âme qu'une belle nuit d'été passée au pieux bivouaque de Sainte-Anne. Ces pénitents agenouillés qui psalmodient et se pressent contre les portes de l'église; ces cantiques qui résonnent sous chacune des tentes éclairées de mille feux—tout respire un parfum religieux, une fra-

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ternité chrétienne qui rappelle les premiers âges de la chrétienté.

But we must hurry on. The road to Auray, the last 'station' in this our rapid pilgrimage, lies along the line from Châteaulin to Nantes. Soon after passing Châteaulin, we reach the fine and pleasantly-situated episcopal city of Quimper. A rest there, and a visit to its beautiful cathedral, whose elegant and lofty twin steeples rise with such grace above the town, will well reward the traveller. Here it was that, as I journeyed in the direction of Sainte Anne d'Auray last July, I began to fall in with the tide of pilgrims on their way to the Pardon. The first and second-class carriages contained a fair proportion, but it was in the wide third-class compartments where one realised what it was to be 'en pèlerinage,' in spite of the seeming inappropriateness of the mode of transit. Albeit, pilgrims do not disdain the service of the iron horse. Here one saw the father of the family, a well-to-do farmer, perhaps, with his wife and one or more of his little ones, who, when they are men, no doubt will take their children on the same journey as their fathers were taken by their grandfathers. And there are the newly-married couple going to ask Sainte Anne's blessing on the newly-founded hearth; and the old grandfather and grandmother who have gone so oft before, and now, perhaps for the last time, are going once more to commit those they leave behind to the Bonne Mère Anne; and there are plenty of young ecclesiastics; a sailor or two from Brest, weatherbeaten and brown; pauvre 'Pitou,' the raw recruit, whose unmistakably Breton countenance we recognise under his newly-donned kepi, and than whose heart there beats no truer

to fatherland under the soldier's coat in France. We honour him, and so we do his older brother in arms who goes with him, and who has scars won in the dear cause to show Sainte Anne this time he comes to thank Heaven and her he has lived to see her shrine once more. And there is the quiet shepherd of sheep—the curé of the parish, in his short *vacances*,



going to pray for himself and his flock. How cheerfully and gaily he exchanges a few words with his fellow-travellers! He belongs to their order and one of themselves, and his sacred office only raises him above them as a father is above his children. We catch him in a moment of repose, 'dix minutes d'arrêt,' it may be, as he is quietly reading, unmoved by the babble and confusion around him. And so we arrive at Auray, where there is an excellent hotel, at which we repose for the night, for the Pardon takes place some four miles out of the town. And here

I pause to say a few words on the origin of the pilgrimage, at least, so far as I am able.

The foundation of a chapel on this spot dedicated in honour of Sainte Anne dates from the seventh century of the Christian era; but it was not until so late as the sixteenth that, owing to certain manifestations (so runs the legend), the image (the remains of which are still to be seen in the church) was discovered. The exertions of a pious peasant, named Nicolaiz, led to the foundation of a new chapel, and it soon became a famous and popular place of pilgrimage, visited, according to the records in stained glass in the modern church, by several distinguished personages, chiefly unfortunate—from our own poor queen, Henrietta Maria, down to an exalted personage whose devotions here and elsewhere brought him, let us trust, some consolation when, a few weeks back, he closed a great career on a bed of suffering—an exile, in a foreign land. Well, the Revolution, as might be expected, of course, turned the poor Carmelite fathers who had charge of the church, out of the place, and with them Sainte Anne. The ancient image was burnt, a portion only being rescued by a brave peasant. There is a touching picture of this scene in one of the painted windows, where, also, the poor peasants are shown praying and weeping outside the closed doors of their favourite church. With the Restoration, Sainte Anne again took possession of her church, which, for some time, remained under the care of the Jesuit fathers. The fathers of that order were replaced, a few years back, by a seminary of secular clergy, who are building a fine new church, much in that essentially bran-new style, of which

visitors to Paris may find such a brilliant example at the top of the Rue du Chaussée d'Antin. It is fondly believed to be the 'style François I'; it is undoubtedly the 'style Napoléon III.' It rose with the second empire, and surely could flourish nowhere out of it.

There is a little court or green before the church. This was entirely surrounded by booths and stalls for the sale of small 'objets de piété,' pious pictures, statuettes and medals of Sainte Anne, rosaries, and long tapers to burn before the shrine; 'tapers' which were really such, and decorated with beautiful little frills and flowers of wax; there were children's toys, trinkets, and Legitimist emblems in plenty. Outside this court the wares exposed for sale were of a more substantial and mundane nature withal—pots and pans, ribbons and laces, brushes and mats, and hardware. And there was a wonderful exhibition, outside which I heard a man frantically inviting the beholders to come and see the siege of Paris by M. le Général Garibaldi—an historical fact, I own, as yet unknown to me. This worthy showman had a gigantic canvas which flapped and jerked in an ostentatious way, and on which were depicted sundry ghastly and bloodthirsty pictures. The good people, however, seemed perfectly satisfied, and no doubt thought the Prussians the cause of all this woe, and dreadfully wicked and ungodly people—as, indeed, I am sure I should like to believe them, if they had to endure one-half the horrors exhibited by this rustic Vernet. Shortly after three, the sounds of a brass band gave notice that the procession, the opening ceremony of the Pardon, was about to begin, and all hurried in the direction of the church. As the cross which preceded it passed

under the portal of the church, the immense crowd assembled outside divided to let those who had a special function to perform in it pass on; then the pilgrims, two and two, fell in, and the vast cortège pressed forward. The quiet, earnest devotion of these simple people was beyond description; not ten minutes ago all was life and gaiety in the little fair, people passing hither and thither, laughing and chatting gaily, making purchases of mementoes of the Pardon or pressing up to the open doors of the church. Now all was quiet and decorum; not a voice rose to break the quaint harmony of the Litany of Sainte Anne, which was chanted in alternate strophes by the immense crowd. There were, of course, the usual amount of banners and gonfalons, and a large statue of Sainte Anne with the Blessed Virgin. Between the strophes of the Litany the band played a lively march. After making the circuit of the church and precincts, the procession arrived at the foot of the 'Scala Sancta,' a curious erection, consisting of an open recessed chapel, raised some twenty feet from the ground. The platform of the chapel is reached by a covered flight of stairs on either side, and contains an altar and representation of the Crucifixion, with the weeping Madonna and St. John beside. Part of the observance of the Pardon is to ascend these steps kneeling, saying a prayer at each step; and great numbers of pilgrims I saw performing this singular, and by no means agreeable, devotional exercise. At the Scala Sancta a short sermon was given by a barefooted Capuchin friar, after which, the Benediction was given, the immense crowd kneeling the while and joining devoutly in the hymns of the ritual. It

is quite impossible for me to describe the impression such a scene as this must produce; one may see crowds and street preaching and psalm-singing enough, but to see a whole crowd as one man engaged in prayer, and a crowd gathered from all classes and orders of society, with the green trees around and the blue heavens above, is a thing, once seen, to be forgotten never. I have chosen this as the subject of my vignette heading. As night closed in, the peasantry retired to their tents, those who were so fortunate as to have rooms in the little cabarets betaking themselves thither. But till a late hour the church was thronged with worshippers; and in the confessionals, the clergy were busy preparing the penitents for the festival of the morrow. Long before dawn the pilgrims were astir, and by half-past three the little streets of the town were again filled. At four o'clock mass was celebrated, and a vast number of pilgrims approached the sacrament. Masses were said at all the altars in the church from six o'clock until eight, when the Bishop of Vannes celebrated and gave the Communion to a great number of persons. At nine there was a high mass sung to simple Gregorian music, in which many of the congregation joined heartily. At length the words 'Ite missa est,'—which are, I own, somewhat equivalent to what Mr. Dickens called the delightful words 'And now,'—sounded from the altar, and, after an enthusiastic burst from the rustic orchestra, placed nearer me than I could have wished, the crowd once more streamed forth into the square. Shortly after three in the afternoon vespers were sung, and the Benediction of the Sacrament given, but already the greater number of pilgrims were

on their way home, and groups might be seen dotting the high-road leading from the church, still holding their rosaries in their hands, engaged in prayer or chatting quietly with their friends and relatives. The happy impression, however, of the Pardon of Sainte Anne d'Auray lasted long after I had looked with almost a lingering eye at her image surmounting the little railway station of the pilgrimage as we steamed away, and it was soon lost amid the embowering trees, and I was left to my reflections.

I suppose they shaped themselves into a question which is ever uppermost in the minds of Englishmen: *Cui bono?* To what end so much time lost, such long journeys undertaken? Where to these prayers and hymns and processions? Are we not Englishmen, and have we not been taught that 'Pardons,' pains, and purgatories are 'fond things,' and 'vainly' invented? I am sure, so far as this is a consoling thought—as no doubt it is to thousands of pious persons—I would be the last to deprive them of the consolation they derive from it. I am not going to propose to transfer the Breton Pardon into England, to start a pilgrimage—say in the Black Country, or at Margate in the season. I do not think it would be appropriate, or that it would be very numerously attended by Whitechapel costermongers, for example. I am afraid it would be regarded as an anachronism and a retrogression of civilization. Such things as these are the growth of centuries, and part of the social life of a people. Our religion, like our politics, expresses itself in other ways. But, alas! I am conscious of preaching a sermon, an old one and a stale, and one that long ago was preached far better by the great

preacher of 'London Society.' Overcome by emotions akin to those to which this humble scribbler has owned himself a prey, overcome by emotions in that first of Christian temples—

'Christ's mighty shrine above His martyr's grave,'

the great prophet of Vanity Fair, utterly regardless of self-respect, had well-nigh bowed before the symbols of the faith that is enshrined around that august sepulchre—but no, it could not be—alas, he cried, for our insularity; there is the Channel between us, and we no more believe in St. Thomas of Canterbury than we do in his successor, John Bird, that his bones will work miracles, or his picture by Sir Thomas Lawrence will wink.

Yet surely there are some lessons to be derived from what I have been describing. And here a word as to the classes who attend these celebrations. They may certainly be called 'representative.' There is, it is true, a fair sprinkling of the gentry, and they certainly do honour, as far as outward demeanour goes, to the order to which they belong. But the majority belong to the purely agricultural classes, farmers and farm labourers and their wives and families; and a fine race of people they are. The men are tall, athletic, and well made, and cleaner as a race, I should say, than their kindred Celtic races. One looked in vain for that peculiarly repulsive type of *vaurien*, so common, unhappily, among the lower classes of great towns in France. Here is such a one, whom I saw at a railway station nearer the confines of the more civilized portions of France. One would wonder how such a fellow ever came to be born, what his parents were like, if he ever was

a boy—but we remember the ‘*Tricotouses de la Guillotine*,’ the



‘*Pétroleuses*,’ and the ‘*gamins*’ of Paris, and what was done in that great city two summers gone. Surely of such things as these, is my friend the growth. We turn from him to his less civilized brethren of the *Bas-Bretagne*:—Well, what are they all doing? Going on pilgrimage. ‘Now a pilgrimage,’ said an English clergyman, writing from this very spot a few years since, ‘seems an anachronism. It was exploded and shown to be vain three hundred years ago. Luther stormed at it, Erasmus sneered at it, Calvin argued against it, Voltaire held it up to merciless ridicule, the Revolution swept it utterly away, yet in this age of steamboats, railways, and electric telegraphs, the shrine of *Sainte Anne* has its thousands of pilgrims, and thousands of prayers are offered to her by the countrymen of Voltaire, in the language of the *Encyclopædia*. Exeter Hall would say, “Give the people the Bible in Brezonec, and the pilgrimages and pardons will disappear;” but the people have the Bible in Brezonec. The Breton bishops have translated it into the vulgar tongue and distributed it at the modest price of one shilling and eightpence. Yet rich and poor still make pilgrimage, they still attend Pardons, they still weary the saints with entreaties to pray for them.’ Here, then, we have to deal with a

fact, a fact, too, which points to a faith in earnestness, whatever we may think of the mode of its expression in the Breton people, which at least has the characteristic of endurance. I will only add the words of a writer in the ‘*Standard*’ some months back, at the time of the pilgrimage to Lourdes, and I think it will express my feelings better than I am able. He says, ‘We may all regret that what we call a purer religion is not the appanage of France, but it is just possible that any religion, if sincerely held, is better than none at all.’ How popular the latter is, it will, perhaps, be more conducive to our own peace of mind, especially at this holy season of joy, not to inquire.

The Pardons of Brittany are by no means its only interesting features. Archaeologists may find among its weird *Menhirs* and *Dolmens* copious food for their antiquarian palates. And is there not to be seen, within a few paces of Landerneau, the Château of La Roche la Forêt, erstwhile that ‘*Joyeuse Gard*,’ whither the great Sir Lancelot du Lac brought Queen Guinever, and which, when he had given her back safe unto her lord, he ever after called the ‘*Dolorous Gard*?’

The quaint language, the peculiarities of race, the wild poetry of their songs and national legends, are a thousand themes for thinkers. I have endeavoured to touch on these in giving you a view of one side of the character of this truly interesting people. I have avoided fault-finding and criticism, for the aim, surely, of a critic is ever ‘how not to do it.’ His rather was the greater mind who bid us find, if might be, ‘sermons in stones and good in everything.’

PEREGRINUS.

ON THE THRESHOLD.

LED on by the lure of their tossing arms,
 By the spell of their splendid hair,
 And the bosoms half unbare,
 I followed the flight of their radiant charms,
 Through the sad and sultry air—
 Through the sad and sultry air ;
 I had tracked them on through a hundred harms,
 And found them still more fair.

I followed the steps of the Bacchant band
 Through a maze with roses red,
 With the dew on my face and head—
 The dew flung back by the careless hand
 Of the beautiful girls that fled—
 Of the beautiful girls that fled ;
 And my heated lips were lightly fann'd
 By the breath of their tender tread.

The stars came out with a trembling gleam,
 And a gentle wind awoke
 In the shades of a caverned oak,
 That started to life from its summer dream,
 That nodded its brows and spoke—
 That nodded its brows and spoke
 Of the passions drowned in the passing stream,
 And the hearts that loved and broke.

But little I recked of the ancient tale
 That the ancient babbler told ;
 For I saw the glance of gold,
 The glittering hair that sought the gale
 From the women bright and bold—
 From the women bright and bold ;
 Like a vessel urged with many a sail
 On an ocean dim and old.

Drawn on by the dance of their glowing limbs
 And the pulse of their fiery feet—
 By a vision wild and fleet ;
 Entranced by the eye that swoons and swims
 In the dew of a rapture sweet—
 In the dew of a rapture sweet ;
 Bewitched by the cries of the Bacchic hymns
 That burst in a bliss complete.

And I heard the call of the plaintive dove,
 From the depths of the myrtle sheaves,
 And the clinging ivy leaves ;
 Yet I felt but the wave of a mighty love,
 But the wave that throbs and heaves—
 But the wave that throbs and heaves ;
 That drags the soul from its flight above,
 And delights, though it still deceives.

Is it well for a man to have loved an hour
In the light of a woman's eye,
In the breath of her panting sigh?
To have lived for love, and lost its power,
And found it all a lie—
And found it all a lie?
Is it well to have won a deadly dower,
To sin and rejoice and die?

But still I pursued the dazzling dance
Of the girls that laughed and leapt,
That sang as they lightly stepped,
With the beckoning hand and the backward glance,
Where the magic moonlight slept—
Where the magic moonlight slept:
I moved like a man in a glorious trance
Through the dewy trees that wept.

But then they came to a temple vast,
Shut in by the shadows deep,
Where the planets glide and peep.
Up a hundred steps they swiftly past,
And ever with laugh and leap—
And ever with laugh and leap;
While I said to my soul, 'We shall read at last
The secret the ages keep.'

The temple rose from its marble base,
As a wonder white and tall,
Through its sombre cypress pall.
Inside lay a world of light and grace,
With revel and water's fall—
With revel and water's fall;
And there was joy in the solemn place,
But a fear crept over all.

And up the height of the hundred stairs
I fled like a guilty soul
That has lost the last control;
And yet I muttered some hasty prayers
As I heard the thunder roll—
As I heard the thunder roll;
And I drank the breath of the perfumed airs
From the steaming urn and bowl.

But I stopped at the threshold yet a while,
To assure my labouring will
That my heart might feast its fill
On the floating locks and the flashing smile,
And the distant song-birds' trill—
And the distant song-birds' trill,
Till I longed to spring to the wooing guile,
Though I stood at the threshold still.

And O the whirl of the maddening throng,
Of the winding hands and feet,
With their frolic bound and beat;

And the pause for the laughter low and long,
In the shade of a shy retreat—
In the shade of a shy retreat,
When the amorous blood was full and strong,
And the warm embraces sweet !

And then to recline on the starry thrones,
To sink and sob and rest
On a white and welcome breast,
While kisses mixed with the gentle tones ;
Were this not far the best—
Were this not far the best ;
And not to faint on the rugged stones,
By the endless road oppress ?

So I pondered still in my troubled heart,
As I gazed at the shining show, }
In its restless ebb and flow ;
At the waving hands that joined to part,
At the feet that came to go—
At the feet that came to go ;
As the dancers wove their wondrous art,
And eddied to and fro.

And why should I pause on the threshold's bound
While love was fresh and free,
With faces fair to see ;
While the fountains flowed with a singing sound,
And a soft, imperious plea—
And a soft, imperious plea.
Should bliss by others be sought and found,
And never be known by me ?

' Ah ! come to our home,' said the pouting lips ;
' Ah ! come,' said the kindling eyes,
' From thy cold and cloudy skies.
Thou shalt twine thy brows with the rose's slips,
And repose where the lily lies—
And repose where the lily lies ;
Thou shalt cool thy mouth with honeyed sips,
And ease thy breast with sighs.'

And I told my soul, ' It is wise and well
To fly from the trail of tears
To the mild and jocund spheres,
Where pleasures smile and the blossoms smell,
And sorrow never sears—
And sorrow never sears ;
Where the shadows fall as the shadows fell,
Through the slow, delicious years.'

Then I raised my foot with a firmer tread
To cross the boundary line ;
And a great resolve was mine
To bury the past and the hateful dead
In the joy of songs and wine—
In the joy of songs and wine ;
When, unawares, ere my passion sped,
I breathed a prayer divine.

Yet I moved my face to the coaxing kiss
Of a woman passing fair ;
When, behold, from her bosom's lair,
Slit forth a snake with an angry hiss,
And coiled in her golden hair—
And coiled in her golden hair ;
While I saw beneath me a dark abyss,
And the bones that whitened there !

And O the woe of the dreadful change
That fell on those features bright,
Like the eclipse of a sudden night
That darkened along the temple's range,
And dimmed the jubilant sight—
And dimmed the jubilant sight ;
That struck with a horror stiff and strange
Those forms of life and light !

For the women turned to threatening shapes,
The love to hollow lust,
To hate the looks of trust ;
To ashes grey the purple grapes,
And the flowers to bitter dust—
And the flowers to bitter dust ;
Yea, monstrous owls and hideous apes
Arose with moth and rust.

And across the threshold figures strode
With swords of flaming fire,
And their feet besmirched with mire ;
That staggered beneath the grievous load
Of an ever-growing ire—
Of an ever-growing ire ;
That hugged as they cursed the piercing goad
Of a never-quenched desire !

And the clash of arms and the cries of pain
Rang over that awful room,
And were mocked by the hidden tomb,
Till I fled through the thunder, night, and rain
From the place of death and doom—
From the place of death and doom ;
But I saw, as I turned, the tortured train,
In the mingled glare and gloom !

F. W. ORDE WARD.



PARTRIDGE MANORS AND ROUGH SHOOTING.

BY 'OLD CALABAR.'

BRIGHT, beautiful, glorious June!

I have often been asked which of the four seasons I like the best; my answer has ever been the same: 'The hunting, shooting, fishing, and racing.' One season I detest (the very name of it gives me the cold shivers)—the *London one*; defend me from that; for if there is a particular time which is calculated to make 'Paterfamilias' miserable and more out of humour than another, it is that abominable period of shopping, dinners, evening parties, operas, theatres, concerts, flirtations, flower-shows, and the dusty Row, with its dangerous holes.

I hate the formality—the snobism of the 'little village.' I begin to think Napoleon I. was right when he said we were 'a nation of shopkeepers.' I do not mind a good dinner, when I can get one; but there is the rub, I never do get a good dinner; the English do not know how to dine. After twenty years' residence on the Continent, I have come to the conclusion that John Bull is miserably, hopelessly behindhand with our French neighbours on all matters pertaining to eating and drinking; but then I balance the account in this way—Mossoo is not a sportsman; and although he will tell you he is a '*chasseur intrépide*,' '*un cavalier de première force*,' he does not shine either in the hunting or shooting field.

But the French ladies? Ah, they can dress; they beat us there again into Smithereens.

I am not like a bear in the hollow of a tree, who has been sucking his paws all the winter to keep him alive; I have been en-

joying most of our country amusements, and I may say the winter has passed pleasantly.

Of late years a deaf ear has been turned to hints thrown out 'for a change of air, things wanted,' &c. Busily engaged in building, draining, planting, and so on, little time could be given by me to London festivities.

The last attack was made in a somewhat ingenious manner.

'Frederick, poor Alice wants her teeth looking at. I think she had better go up to town for three weeks or a month, and be put under the care of a good dentist.'

This was as much as to say, 'We are all to go;' but I was equal to the occasion.

'By all means, my dear, let her go. My sister is there for the season, and will only be too delighted to have her; but as for my leaving the place at present, with all I have to do, it is an utter impossibility.' This was a settler.

Somehow or other I begin to feel more lively as spring comes on. As a rule, about the middle of May I require a little spring medicine and a change of air. I find that the breezes of Epsom Downs agree famously with me, although my better half always declares I 'look vilely' on my return. Absurd nonsense! But I love my own quiet country life; its wild unfettered freedom. Away from the smoke, dust, and tumult of over-crowded cities—away from late hours and the unwholesome glare of gas, and I am happy.

A trip to Ascot and Goodwood with my family keeps matters all straight. A break now and then,

and the quiet monotony of country life is not felt.

June, bright, beautiful, glorious June, has peculiar attractions for me. I am a shooter. I have not a grouse moor, for the simple reason I cannot afford one; as my old keeper says, 'It is master's terrible long family and expenses that prevents his going into shooting as he would like.'

I am obliged to content myself with a partridge manor; and, after all, I believe I like partridge and snipe shooting better than any other.

A friend of mine once said he considered *snipe-shooting* 'the fox-hunting of shooting,' and I am disposed to agree with him.

But, to return to June, from the 5th to about the 20th of the month, most of the forward hatches come off, and are seen basking and bathering round their mother, as represented in the frontispiece.

But there are other hatches much later, for cheepers are often found in September quite unfit to shoot at.

I can only account for this, that the old birds have had their eggs destroyed in some way or other.

A partridge manor is not one quarter the expense of pheasants and covers. The latter birds not only require constant attention, night and day, but feeding forms a very serious item. Pheasants are very costly, and only within reach of the rich man.

A partridge manor, to have a good head on it, though, must be well looked after, the vermin kept down, and your keeper with a sharp eye to all poachers and suspicious characters.

With a net at night they often sweep off the birds wholesale; but there is a very easy way of baffling them. Put sticks, about eighteen inches high, fifteen, twenty, or thirty yards apart, over the ground

the partridges generally roost on; these, as the net is drawn along, lift it up, and the birds easily escape.

It is a good plan to walk the fields of an evening with a brace of dogs, where you know they roost, and disturb them; they may probably then take to the gorse, if any, potatoes, seed clover, and other safe ground.

In May and June I wage war with the crows, magpies, jays and hawks, shooting or trapping the old hen birds. Always kill the male bird first: this is easily done by waiting patiently within shot, under cover of some tree or hedge where the nest is, which is generally built in some pretty high tree; the hen will not desert if sitting hard, which you should allow her to do, her death is then easily accomplished.

I never allow poison to be used, for I hold that a keeper who cannot destroy all vermin by means of his gun and traps is not worth his wages.

To have any quantity of game, it is better that you and your keepers are on good terms with your neighbours; they will do as much good as half a dozen watchers.

In May and June I always keep a lot of light broody hens ready to sit, for during the mowing season many partridge nests are cut out. The eggs are brought warm to me, and are instantly set under one of the hens.

The people who bring me in the eggs I invariably reward, but they are never encouraged or allowed to look for nests. Now, if these men were not paid a trifle, and a horn of ale given to them, they would not trouble themselves or lose their time. It would be very easy to put their foot on the eggs and crush them.

I am not an advocate for hand-reared birds, as there is some trouble

and expense feeding them, and they do not grow strong and vigorous nearly so quickly as wild ones.

In one year alone, some four or five seasons back, I had six hundred eggs cut out, and over five hundred birds were reared.

Chamberland's food is the best for them, as well as for pheasants.

Of course the hens should be cooped. There is one thing you must be most particular about, and that is never to place the coops near an old bank, or where there are rabbit-burrows, for these spots are not only the haunts of stoats and weasels, but there is an animal quite as dangerous, who loves a young partridge—the hedgehog. Many are of opinion that the hedgehog is harmless, but this idea I have proved to be erroneous (see 'Over Turf and Stubble,' published by Richard Bentley, 'The Hedgehog a Game-eater').

My life has been spent following up the sports of the field and observing the habits of different animals.

The better way is, when your birds are young, to have them on your lawn, or in a field close to the house.

The coops must be closed at night, to keep vermin and cats (deadly poachers) getting at them. It is a mistake to let them out too early of a morning. The drier the ground the better partridges do when young. As they get stronger, remove them with their coops to a potato or clover field, cutting a swarth through the latter to put the coops on and feed them. Place the coops twenty or thirty yards apart, or the birds, when young, will be straying into the wrong coops, and the hens will kill them, for they well know their own family.

I like a clover-field the best, because there is lots of cover, and

they escape the sharp eye of hawks and other vermin.

In taking a partridge manor, ascertain first, by going over it *yourself*, if there is a fair head of breeding stock on the ground.

A wise 'old saw' informs us that, 'if you want anything done well, do it yourself,' and this I certainly advise in this case, unless you have a keeper you can really trust.

Do not take a manor that has too much grass land. There ought to be plenty of cover—turnips, clover, potatoes, rape, stubble, heath, &c., to insure good sport; for, if your ground is bare, although you may have plenty of birds, it will soon be impossible to get at them, for, as you enter a field, they will be away at the other end, and not having any cover to drive them to, you may follow them for hours and never get a shot.

A manor, too, should not be all low ground, or the inclosures too small. In such a country, good, fast and free-going dogs soon become cramped in their range and potterers. It is, in an inclosed country, impossible to mark the birds; and constantly getting over stiff fences not only tires you, but it unsteadies your hand, which will lose its cunning.

A partridge country should be as open as possible; then you can see your dogs work, which, in my humble opinion, constitutes the greatest charm of shooting.

Farms are often let at eighteenpence an acre, which is an absurd price—a shilling is quite enough; but in many counties you can get as much good ground as you like at sixpence, but not near London. I hired, some two years ago, some capital rough shooting in North Wales at less than threepence an acre, but it was too cold for my better half to reside in during the winter months. Whatever county

you may fix on, avoid the red-legs; though a very handsome bird, and much larger than ours, they are not nearly so good for the table as the grey ones, being dry and tasteless; and they will spoil any dog, as they never take wing unless hardly pressed, but will run field after field. I destroy their eggs wherever I meet them.

In Norfolk, Suffolk, and particularly Essex, there are large quantities of them; they not only ruin your dogs, but they drive the grey birds away. I would not have a manor where there were any quantity of red-legs at a gift.

Having now told you how to go to work, I will, in the garb of narrative, which, nevertheless, is true, show you how shooting, with other sport, may be had at little cost by those who love it and prefer a country life. I give it you as related to me by a very dear old friend of mine.

'Lenox and myself were boys at school, and afterwards at college, together. A fine handsome fellow he was too, and doatingly attached to all field sports; he was not a rich man, quite the contrary, 300*l.* a year at his father's death was all he had left to him, yet he managed to keep up a tolerable appearance even in London, and was engaged to one of the most beautiful girls I ever saw, and with a nice little fortune of her own.

'Lenox was very fond and very proud of her, as well he might be; everything was arranged, the day fixed, trousseau bought, and his pretty little cottage in Hampshire newly and tastefully furnished to receive its new mistress. But, lo! a week before their wedding the young lady eloped with a nobleman, and they were married before Lenox knew anything about it.

'He said little, but felt it deeply; all were sorry for him, for he was a great favourite.

'Shortly after his pretty little cottage was sold, and with his effects Lenox vanished mysteriously, no one knew whither.

'I went abroad, and was away many years, and, therefore, had no means of finding out where he had betaken himself to, or what he was doing.

'After more than twenty years' absence I returned to the old land; I had been satiated with sport of all kinds in different parts of the globe, and did not feel inclined to give the high prices asked for shootings.

'My wife was somewhat delicate, and required a mild climate, so I took "the galloper," ran down to Plymouth, and from thence to Cornwall, determined, if I could, to buy a place there. I roamed about the country looking at different estates, and at last hit on a beautiful spot, with a nice house on it, convenient to the rail, and not too far from a good country town or schools.

'One day during my peregrinations with the agent who had the selling of the property, I came on one of the most lovely little cottages I ever saw, placed on a slope, well sheltered from the winds, myrtles and fuchsias growing luxuriantly and abundantly about, with its jessamine and honeysuckle covered porch, thatched roof, well-kept grounds, gardens, and brawling stream at the end of the lawn. I thought it one of the most fairy-looking little spots I had ever seen.

"Whose cottage is that?" I asked, "it is not on this property, is it?"

"Oh no, sir, just off this land; it belongs to Mr. Lenox."

"Lenox," I breathlessly asked, "Horace Lenox?"

"That's it, sir—one of the nicest gentlemen in these parts, and a rare sportsman; it is not his own property, only hired on long lease, but he has done a deal to it; three thousand acres of good mixed shooting and capital fishing, with that cottage, is not dear at fifty pounds a year, is it, sir?"

"I should think not, indeed. Mr. Lenox is one of my oldest friends. I must go and call on him," which I did.

"I was told, on asking at the door, that he was out fishing, but would be home to dinner at six o'clock.

"Give him this card," I said to the respectable old servant who had answered the ring, "and tell him, I shall be here at six to dine with him. Is he married?"

"Oh dear no, sir, master is a single gentleman. I don't think he cares much about the women folk," she added, in her quaint Cornish way.

The time hung heavily on my hands that day, so impatient was I to see my dear, valued old friend, and half-past five saw me walking up the well-kept walk towards his house.

As I approached, a figure issued from the porch, surrounded by four or five beautiful setters.

A fine, handsome-looking man of three or four and forty advanced towards me, but quite grey; there was no mistaking, though, his honest, beaming, well-known face.

"Frederick, old fellow," said he, grasping me by the hand, "this is indeed kind of you; hundreds of times have I wondered what had become of you, and if you were still in the land of the living."

"And I the same, Lenox; by mere chance have I found you out. I inquired at all the old haunts when I returned to England, and

could never learn where you were."

"Then you are the gentleman, I suppose, that has been looking at the estate next to me, with a view to purchase?"

"Just so, Horace, *ecce homo*."

"You could not do better, old fellow; I will put you in the way. I know every inch of the ground—rare shooting—but come in, and I will tell you all about it after dinner. Margaret, my servant, is in the devil's own way, for it is rarely I ever have any one to dine with me."

The inside of the cottage was just as pretty as the outside; his dining-room was a study for a sportsman: guns, rods, sporting pictures, &c., here hung all round the walls in endless profusion; it was the very essence of comfort and taste.

"Now, Horace," said I, as I threw myself into one of the comfortable arm-chairs beside the open window, and he into another, "tell me all that has happened since we last met."

"That is easily done," he returned, drawing up a small table between us, with a bottle of claret on it, that sent its aroma all over the apartment as he drew the cork.

"You know how I was served in London?" and his face assumed a hard, stern expression as he asked the question.

"Well, yes," I replied; "but you have forgotten all that, Horace?"

"I have not forgotten it. I never can forget it; it was a dreadful blow to me; but I have forgiven it years ago, and am content with my lot. I left London in disgust, wandered about, and at last found this little spot. I have the shooting of three thousand acres of land—ten acres for my two cows—I am

as happy as possible. I breed lots of those," pointing to his setters, who were lying about; "and they pay me well. I have poultry, pigs, shooting—the woodcock and snipe shooting is particularly good in the season—and fishing in abundance; as good a cob as any man need possess; deny myself nothing in reason, and never know what a dull hour is. But you will sleep here, for I have already found out where you were, and sent for your things."

"I never passed a happier evening than I did with my long-lost friend; we smoked our cigars and talked of old times and old things that had happened years ago, passed never to return again.

"So your eldest boy is sixteen," he remarked, after one of the pauses. "Well, you must buy this place, Frederick, it is as cheap as dirt, and will pay you well. I will make your lads sportsmen—but I suppose you have done that yourself. I want companions now—no female ones," he added, laughingly, "your wife excepted; but some one to fish and shoot with me—the partridge-shooting is capital."

"I was delighted with all I saw the next day; the place was lovely, and I was induced to spend a week with him. At the end of that time I was the purchaser of the property, and left to bring down my family and all my belongings.

"I have never regretted the step; though far away from the busy hum of the world, we are as happy as may be. Horace and I fish and shoot away; there is a calm quietness which I love. I, like my friend, have had some ups and downs in life, but they, in my country retreat, are gradually "fading away."

It is all very well for men who have long purses and large possessions to take expensive shootings; they can afford it and why should they not? What might I not be tempted to do if I had the chance, I cannot say, and, therefore, I will not speculate.

To my young readers who are not *au fait* at all these matters, I would urge them never to be too hasty in deciding on taking any shooting. If they are not in easy circumstances, they must go very cautiously to work; but that fair partridge and general shooting is to be had at a moderate figure I can prove.

It is not generally known, but there are many parts of Scotland where there is first-rate partridge-shooting, and arrangements can be made to have it after the grouse-shooters have done and returned to England. I know several gentlemen who have made this arrangement, and get their sport at a very moderate cost.

But gadding about to places is not my form. I prefer to remain on the spot, and then I can always see how matters are going on.

In taking a rough bit of shooting, only one keeper is necessary; one good man will do it far better than half a dozen bad ones. It is, I admit, a difficult thing to get such a man, but they are to be had.

I have written this paper solely for the guidance of those whose means are limited; the rich can do as they like; money is often no object to them; but this I have known to be a fact, that the man who has only spent two or three hundreds, and often very much less, on his shooting has had far better sport than many of those who have spent thousands.

'NO INTENTIONS.'

BY FLORENCE MARRYAT, AUTHOR OF 'LOVE'S CONFLICT,' 'VERONIQUE,' ETC.

CHAPTER VI.

'*WHAT is the reason that that woman is permitted to behave towards us as she does?*'

Irene closes the dining-room with a loud slam as she speaks, and, as she turns to confront him again, Oliver Ralston sees that the pallor that overspread her features at the housekeeper's insulting speech has given way to a rosy flush of anger.

'Indeed I cannot tell you, Mrs. Mordaunt: I have asked myself the same question for years past, but never been able to arrive at any satisfactory conclusion. But you are trembling: pray sit down—this scene has overcome you.'

'Overcome me! How could it do else but overcome me? I have not been used to see servants assume the place of mistresses; and I feel, since I have come to Fen Court, as though the world were turned upside down. Mr. Ralston, do you know that that woman occupies one of the best rooms in the house?'

'I know it well! I was sent back to school once, in the midst of my holidays, for having had the childish curiosity to walk round it.'

'That she lies in bed till noon,' continues Irene, 'and has her breakfast carried up to her; that she does nothing here to earn her living, but speaks of the house and servants as though they were her own property—'

'I can well believe it.'

'And that she has actually refused to receive any orders from me.'

'Not really!' exclaims Oliver Ralston, earnestly.

'Really and truly!'

'And what did my uncle say to it?'

'That I had better give my orders to the cook instead!'

There is silence between them for a few minutes, till Irene goes on, passionately:

'I could not bear it—I would not bear it—if it were not for Philip. But he is the very best and kindest man in the world, and I am sure he would prevent it if he could. Sometimes, Mr. Ralston, I have even fancied that he is more afraid of Quekett than any of us.'

'It is most extraordinary,' muses Oliver, 'and unaccountable. That there is a mystery attached to it I have always believed, for the most quixotic devotion to a father's memory could hardly justify a man in putting up with insult from his inferiors. Why, even as a child, I used to remark the difference in my uncle's behaviour towards me when Quekett was away. His manner would become quite affectionate.'

'Doesn't she like you, then?'

'She *hates* me, I believe.'

'But why?'

'I have not the least idea, unless it is that boys are not easily cowed into a deferential manner, and Mrs. Quekett has always stood greatly on her dignity. Do you not see how frightened Aunt Isabella is of her?'

'Indeed I do. I waylaid her, only yesterday, going up to the old woman's room with the newspapers, that had but just arrived by the morning's post. I took

them all back again. "Not to-day's, if you please, Isabella," I said. "I should think yesterday's news was quite fresh enough for the servants' hall." "Oh! but Mrs. Quekett has always been accustomed," she began—you know her funny way—but I had mine in the end. And Philip said I was right. He always does say so whenever I appeal to him. But why can't he get rid of her?"

'Why, indeed! Perhaps there is some clause attached to the conditions on which he holds the property, of which we know nothing. I suppose it will all come to light some day. Discussion is futile.'

'And I am not sure that it is right,' replies Irene, blushing. 'Perhaps I should not have spoken so freely as I have, but I was much annoyed. Whatever Colonel Mordaunt's reasons may be for keeping Mrs. Quekett, I am sure of one thing—that they are good and just, for he is of too upright and honourable a character to lend his hand to anything that is wrong.'

'My uncle is a happy man to have so staunch a defender in his absence,' says Oliver, admiringly.

'If his wife does not defend him, who shall?' she answers; 'but all this time I am forgetting that you have had no refreshment, Mr. Ralston. What a careless hostess you must think me! Now, confess that you have had no dinner.'

'Well, none that deserves that name, certainly.'

'I thought so; but what can you expect, if you go and stay at a wretched hovel like the "Dog and Fox?" Let us see what the Court larder can produce,' ringing the bell. 'At all events, Mrs. Quekett shall not baulk us of our supper.'

She orders the table to be spread, and in a very short time a sub-

stantial 'repast' is placed before them, to which they sit down together, banishing the subject of Mrs. Quekett by mutual consent, until the Colonel shall return again, and chatting on such topics as are more consistent with their youth and relative positions.

At eleven o'clock the carriage wheels are heard grating on the gravelled drive, and Irene starts to her feet joyfully.

'Here he is,' she cries. 'Now we will have this matter set right for us.'

Oliver also rises, but does not appear so confident: on the contrary, he remains in the background until the first salutations between Mrs. Mordaunt and the returning party are over. Then his uncle catches sight of him.

'Holloa! who have we here? Why, Oliver!'—with the slightest shade of annoyance passing over his face—'I had no idea you intended coming down so soon. Why didn't you say so in your letter? When did you arrive?'

But his wife gives him no time to have his questions answered.

'Now, are you not pleased?' she exclaims. 'Have I not done right? I met this gentleman in the shrubbery, Philip, smoking—all by himself; and, when I found he was your nephew, and was actually staying at that dirty little "Dog and Fox"—fancy sleeping in that hole—I gave him an invitation to Fen Court on the spot, and made him come back with me. Now, wasn't I right?—say so!'—with her face in dangerous proximity to the Colonel's.

'Of course you were right, my darling—you always are,' he replies, kissing her; 'and I am very glad to see Oliver here. Have you—have you seen old Quekett?' he continues, in rather a dubious tone, turning to his nephew.

But Irene again interferes.

'Seen her, Philip—I should think we *had* seen her, and heard her into the bargain. She has been so *horribly* rude to us.'

Colonel Mordaunt's face flushes.

'Rude! I hope not! Perhaps you misinterpreted what she said, Irene. You are rather apt to take offence in that quarter, you know, young lady.'

'I could not possibly mistake her meaning; she spoke too plainly for that. Besides, Mr. Ralston was with me, and heard what she said. She as good as told him he was not a gentleman!'

Colonel Mordaunt grows scarlet.

'Oh! come! come! don't let us think or talk any more about an old woman's crotchety speeches.'

'But, Philip, we *must* talk, because the worst is to come. I told her to have the Green Room prepared for Mr. Ralston, and she flatly refused to do so without your orders.'

'Well, give her my orders, then!'

'Indeed, I shall do no such thing!' with a slight pout. 'If mine are not to be obeyed, you must deliver your own. Meanwhile no room is ready for your nephew, and — *our guest*, remember!'

'Well, my darling, ring the bell, then, and tell them to get it ready,' he answers, testily.

The bell resounds through the house.

'Order Quekett'—Irene issues the command with a sharpness very foreign to her—to have the Green Room prepared *at once* for Mr. Ralston. Remember the *Green Room*!

As soon as the servant has disappeared, Colonel Mordaunt seems most anxious to drop the subject.

'Well, Oliver, and so you think of practising in the country, eh? That's not the road to fame, remember.'

'I am afraid the road I am treading now, sir, will not lead me there either. A town life is too expensive and too full of temptation for such a weak fool as I am. I cannot resist it, therefore I must put it out of my way.'

'That is true strength,' says Irene, with kindling eyes. She is standing now against her husband, and has drawn one of his arms round her waist.

'But why seek work near Priestley—the worst possible place you could come to?'

'Only because I heard of it here. A Dr. Robertson, of Fenton, advertised for an assistant, and I thought it might be an opening. I saw him this morning.'

'And have you decided anything?'

'Certainly not. Robertson and I like the looks of each other, and I think we should pull together. But I should not dream of settling anything until I had consulted you.'

'Right! To-morrow I may be able to advise you: to-night I am too sleepy. Come, Irene, are you ready for bed?'

'Quite ready,' and the party separates. On her way upstairs, Irene peeps into the Green Room, half expecting to find it dark and deserted. But no; candles are burning on the toilet-table, towels and soap and other necessities are in their proper places, and a couple of rosy housemaids are beating up the pillows and making the bed. All is right so far; and Irene enters her own room, almost ready to believe that Mrs. Quekett must have repented of her hasty behaviour.

Here she finds her husband waiting for her.

'Irene,' he commences, gravely, 'don't try and persuade young Ralston to remain here over to-night.'

'Of course I will not, if it is against your wish, Philip. But I thought, in asking him, that I was only doing just what you would have done yourself.'

'Oh, yes! it doesn't matter—I am glad enough to see the boy—only he might have timed his visit more conveniently. We shall be full next week, you know.'

She does not know any such thing, nor does she heed it. Another mystery is troubling her now.

'Philip! why have you never told me about this nephew of yours?'

'I have told you, haven't I? Don't you remember my mentioning him one day at Weymouth?'

'I do; but it was only *en passant*. Yet he tells me he is your ward.'

'Well, a kind of ward. I wish he were not'—with a sigh.

'Does he give you so much trouble?'

'A great deal, and has always done so. He leads much too fast a life, and his health has given way under it, and his morals. He drinks too much and smokes too much—he has even gambled. It is for this reason, chiefly, that I do not wish him to become intimate with you. I value my precious girl too much to expose her purity to contamination.'

She slips her hand into his.

'Too hard a word, Philip. How could Mr. Ralston's company injure me? He is not likely to infect me with the vices you mention. But, if you alienate him from all respectable society, what incentive will he ever have to relinquish them? And he is an orphan, too! poor fellow!'

'You like him, Irene?'

'Yes; I like his face; it is open and candid. I like his manner, too, which is so entirely free from self-conceit. I feel that

I should like to be a friend to him. Why should I not try?'

'You shall try, my darling—at least, when Quekett is gone to town. But, to tell you the truth, Irene, Oliver and she are sworn enemies, and there is no peace in the house whilst they are together.'

'Why do you allow it, Philip?' says Irene, stoutly. 'Why don't you tell that woman she must either respect your guests or go?'

'She doesn't look on Oliver as a guest,' he replies, evasively. 'She has known him from a baby.'

'She has not known me from a baby,' says his wife, bitterly; 'and yet she speaks to me as no menial has ever presumed to speak before. Oh, Philip! if it were not for you, I couldn't stand it!'

'Hush! hush! my darling, it shall not occur again, I promise you. I shall speak to Quekett, and tell her I will not have you annoyed in this manner. You saw that I upheld your authority this evening.'

'Yes, I did. Thank you for it, and I hope it will be a lesson to the old wretch, for I detest her!'

'Strong words for a lady!' laughs Colonel Mordaunt, simply because he does not echo the sentiment.

He takes up his candlestick, and moves a little way towards the door. Then he returns suddenly, bends over his wife, and kisses her.

'Thank you,' he says, softly, 'for wishing to befriend poor Oliver, my dear!'

At these words, what Mr. Ralston told her concerning his uncle's affection being more demonstrative at one time than another, rushes into her mind, and she says, abruptly:

'Did you love his mother very much, Philip?'

'His mother!' Colonel Mordaunt appears quite upset by the remark.

'Yes; your sister: you never had a brother, had you?'

'No! I never had a brother,' he answers, vaguely.

'Then Oliver is your sister's child, I suppose. Which sister? Was she older than Isabella?'

'No! she was two years younger.' Colonel Mordaunt has recovered himself by this time, and speaks quite calmly. 'I had three sisters, Anne, Isabella, and Mary. Poor Mary made a runaway match and her father never spoke to her afterwards.'

'Well!'

'When she was dying she wrote to me (she had always been my favourite sister, poor girl!), and asked me to go and see her. Of course I went (she had been a widow for more than a year then, and was living at Cannes), and stayed by her till the last. Then I returned home, and—and—brought Oliver with me.'

'Her only child, of course.'

'The only child—yes. My father would have nothing to say to the boy; he was a little chap of about two years old at the time, and so I kept him. What else could I do?'

'And have brought him up and educated him, and everything since. Oh, Philip, how good of you—how very kind and good! How I do love and admire you for it!' And she seizes her husband's head between her hands and gives it a good squeeze. On being released, Colonel Mordaunt appears very red and confused.

'Don't, my darling, pray don't: I am not worthy of your pure affection; I wish I were. I have only done what common justice demanded of me.'

'And you will let me help you to finish the task,' says Irene. 'I dare say all these things—the knowledge of his orphanhood and that his grandfather wouldn't ac-

knowledge him—have weighed on his mind, poor boy, and driven him to the excesses of which you complain. Let us be his friends, Philip; good, firm, honest friends; ready to praise him when he is right, but not afraid to blame him when he is wrong—and you will see him a steady character yet. I am sure of it—there is something in the very expression of his face that tells me so.'

Her husband catches her enthusiasm; thanks her again for the interest she displays on behalf of his nephew; and leaves her just in the mood to confront Mrs. Quekett and defeat her with her own weapons. And on the landing, outside the bedroom door, where she had probably been airing her ear at the keyhole, he intercepts her.

'Quekett!' he says, loftily, as she starts at his forthcoming, 'I wish to say two words to you in my dressing-room. Be so good as to follow me.'

He stalks to the hall of judgment majestically with his candlestick in his hand, and she follows in his train, but she will not stoop so low as to close the dressing-room door upon their entrance; and so the Colonel has to return and do it himself, which rather detracts from his assumption of dignity.

'Well, sir!' she commences from the chair in which she has, as usual, ensconced herself; 'and what may your two words be? I have rather more than two to say to you myself; and as it's usual for ladies to come first, perhaps I'd better be the one to begin.'

'You can do as you like,' replies Colonel Mordaunt, whose courage is all oozing out of his fingers' ends at being shut up alone with the old beldame.

'My words won't take long to say, though they may be more than

yours. It just comes to this, Colonel: you promised me Oliver shouldn't stay in this house again, and you've broke your promise, that's all.'

'I promised you that his staying here should never inconvenience you, and you have got to prove that it will do so. Besides, it is almost entirely your own fault that it has occurred. If you had restrained your feelings a little this evening, as any prudent person would have done, you would not have excited Mrs. Mordaunt to try her influence against yours. You are carrying the game too far, Quekett. You have spoken rudely to my wife, and that is a thing that I cannot countenance in you or any one.'

'Oh, yes; of course, *my wife*. Everything's *my wife* now: and let bygones be bygones, and all the past forgotten.'

'I think bygones should be bygones, Quekett, when we can do no good by raking them up again.'

'Not for our own ill-convenience, Colonel, certainly. But to such as me, who have held by one family for a space of thirty years, and suffered with it as the Lord alone knows how, to see a place turned topsy-turvy and the servants all helter-skelter to please the freaks of a young girl, no one can say but it's trying. Why there's not a chair or a table in that drawing-room that stands in the same place as it used to do; and as for the dinners, since she's been at what you call the head of your establishment, there's not been a dinner placed upon the table that I'd ask a workhouse pauper to sit down and eat with me!'

'Well, well,' says Colonel Mordaunt, impatiently, 'these are my grievances surely, and not yours: If you have no worse complaint to bring against Mrs. Mordaunt

than this, I am satisfied. But what has it to do with your refusing to take her orders?'

'Her orders, indeed!' says the housekeeper, with a sniff.

'To follow her wishes, then, if you like the term better, with respect to so simple a thing as having one room or another prepared for her guests.'

'The Green Room for Oliver,' she interrupts, sarcastically; 'I never heard of such a thing!'

'You, at all events,' he answers, sternly, 'should be the last to raise an objection to it.'

'But I do raise it, Colonel, and I shall. I say it's absurd to treat that lad as though he was a nobleman (why, you haven't a better room to put the Prince of Wales in, if he came to visit you); and then to think of that——'

'Be careful what you say, Quekett. Don't make me too angry. I shall stand up for Oliver Ralston——'

'Oliver Fiddlesticks!'

'Whatever the rest of the family may do; and you, who talk so much of clinging to us and being faithful to our interests, should uphold, instead of fighting against me in this matter. I confess that I cannot understand it. You loved his mother, or I conclude you did——'

'Loved his mother!' echoes the woman, shrilly, as she rises from her chair; 'it is because I loved his mother, Colonel, that I hate the sight of him; it is because I remember her innocent girlhood, and her blighted womanhood, and her broken-hearted death, that to hear him speak and see him smile, in his bold way, makes me wish she had died before she had left behind her such a mockery of herself. I can't think what she was after not to do it, for she hadn't much to live for at the last, as you know well.'

'Poor Mary!' sighs the Colonel. 'Ah! *poor Mary*; that's the way the world always speaks of the lucky creatures that have escaped from it. I don't call her *poor Mary*, and turn up the whites of my eyes after your fashion; but I can't live in the same house with her son, and so I've told you before. Either Oliver goes, or I go. You can take your choice.'

'But you are talking at random, Quekett. You have got a crotchet in your head about Oliver, just as you have a crotchet in your head about receiving Mrs. Mordaunt's orders, and one is as absurd as the other. Just try to look at these things in a reasonable light, and all would go smoothly.'

But Mrs. Quekett is not to be smoothed down so easily.

'You can do as you please, Colonel, but my words stand. You have chosen to keep Master Oliver here.'

'I could not have done otherwise without exciting suspicion; would you have me blab the story to all the world?' he says, angrily.

'Oh! if you go on in this way, Colonel, I shall blab it myself, and save you the trouble. As if it wasn't enough to have the Court pulled to pieces before my eyes, and to be spoken to as if I was the scum of the earth, without being crossed in this fashion. You told me just now, Colonel, not to make you *too* angry—don't you do the same by me, or I may prove a tougher customer than I've done yet. Now, do you mean to let Oliver stay on here, or no?'

'I shall let him remain as long as it seems proper to myself,' replies her master, whose temper is now fairly roused.

The housekeeper can hardly believe her ears.

'You—will—let—him—remain!' she gasps. 'And why

don't you add, "according to Mrs. Mordaunt's wishes?"'

'I do add it, Quekett—"according to Mrs. Mordaunt's wishes." Mrs. Mordaunt is mistress here, and the length of her guests' visits will be determined by her desire. And whilst she is mistress here, remember that I will have her treated by you as a mistress, and not as an equal.'

Quekett stares at him for a moment in silent surprise; and then the angry blood pumps up into her face, filling her triple chins until they look like the wattles of an infuriated turkey, and making her voice shake with the excitement that ensues.

'Very well, Colonel. I understand you. You have said quite enough,' she replies, quivering.

'It is as well you should understand me, Quekett, and I ought to have said all this long before. You are angry now, but when you have had time to think over it, you will see that I am right.'

'Very well, Colonel—that is quite sufficient—you will have no more trouble on my account, I can assure you;' and with that Mrs. Quekett sweeps out of the dressing-room.

Colonel Mordaunt doesn't feel quite comfortable after her departure; it has been too abrupt to leave a comfortable impression behind it: but he consoles himself with the reflection that he has done what is right (not always a reflection to bring happiness with it, by the way, and often accompanied by much the same cold comfort presented by gruel, or any other nastiness that we swallow in order to do us good); and seeking Irene's presence again, sleeps the sleep of the just, trusting to the morning's light to dispel much of his foreboding.

The morning's light dispels it after this wise.

Between six and seven Irene is awakened by a strange sound at her bedside, something between the moaning of the wind and a cat's mew; and jumps up to find her sister-in-law standing there, looking as melancholy as a mute at a funeral, and sniffing into a pocket-handkerchief.

'Good gracious, Isabella! what is the matter? Is Philip—'

But no; Philip is occupying his own place of honour, and has not yet opened his eyes upon this wicked world.

'What is the matter? Are you ill?'

'Oh, no, my dear Mrs. Mordaunt; but Mrs. Quekett—I shouldn't have ventured in here, you may be quite sure—' and here Isabella's virgin eyes are modestly veiled—'except that Mrs. Quekett is—oh! what *will* Philip say?'

'Is she dead?' demands Irene, with a lively interest not quite in accordance with the solemn inquiry.

'Dead! My dear Mrs. Mordaunt, no!'

'What is the row?' says her brother, now awake for the first time.

'Oh, Philip, Mrs. Quekett is gone.'

'Gone! where to?'

'I don't know; but I think to London—to Lady Baldwin's—I tried to stop her, but I couldn't; she would go.'

'Jubilate!' cries Irene, clapping her hands. 'I am so glad. Is she really gone? It's too good to be true.'

'Oh! but, my dear Mrs. Mordaunt, she was so angry, and so unkind, she wouldn't even *kiss* me,' says Isabella, relapsing into a fresh series of sniffs.

'Faugh!' replies Irene. 'What a misfortune! But, Philip, had you any idea of this?'

'None!'

'Is it because of what occurred last night?'

'I am afraid so.'

'Why afraid? We shall do much better without her. How did she go, Isabella?'

'In the carriage. I knew nothing about it till I heard the carriage drive up to the door. There is a nine o'clock train to London—I suppose she means to catch that!'

'In the carriage,' repeats Irene; 'Philip, did you ever hear of such impertinence?'

'Well, never mind, my darling; never mind it now,' he replies, soothingly. 'You see she always has been used to have the carriage to drive to the station in, on these occasions: it is not as though she were an ordinary servant, but it won't occur again—or, at all events, for some time,' he adds, as a proviso to himself. 'Did Quekett mention how long she is likely to be absent, Isabella?'

'No! she told me nothing—she would hardly speak to me—she was very, very crotchety,' replies his sister.

'How I hope she may stay away for ever!' says Irene. 'Come, Isabella, you must let me get up. It will be quite a new sensation to go down to breakfast and feel there is no chance of meeting that bird of evil omen on the stairs.'

So Miss Mordaunt leaves her brother and sister-in-law to their respective toilets, and retires, quite overcome by Irene's boldness, and almost shaken in her faith respecting the power held by Mrs. Quekett over the inhabitants of Fen Court.

As, some minutes after, the Colonel is quietly enjoying his matutinal bath, he is almost startled out of his seven senses by a violent rapping against the partition which divides his dressing-room from his wife's bedroom.



Drawn by Frank Dicksee.

"NO INTENTIONS."

"I am not at all, that is, I am not suddenly."

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'My dear girl, what is the matter?' he exclaims, as he feels his inability to rush to the rescue.

'Philip! Philip!' with a dozen more raps from the back of her hair-brush. 'Look here, Philip—may Oliver stay with us now?'

'Yes! yes!' he shouts, in answer, 'as long as ever you like! Thank heaven, it's nothing worse,' he murmurs to himself, as he sinks back into his bath. 'I really thought the old witch had repented of her purpose, and was down on us again!'

As a whole, the village of Priestley is not picturesque in appearance, but it has wonderfully romantic-looking bits scattered about it here and there, as what country village has not? Tumble-down cottages, belonging to landlords more 'near' than thrifty, or rented by tenants whose weekly wages go to swell the income of the 'Dog and Fox,' with untidy gardens attached to them, where the narrow paths have been almost washed away by the spring showers, until they form mere gutters for the summer rain, into which the heavy blossoms of the neglected rose-trees lie, sodden and polluted from the touch of earth. Or old-fashioned cottages, built half a century before, when bricks and mortar were not so scarce as now, and held together in a firmer union, and roofs were thatched instead of slated. Cottages with darker rooms, perhaps, than the more modern ones possess, because the casements are latticed with small diamond-shaped panes, of which the glass is green and dingy, but which can boast of wide fire-places and a chimney-corner (that inestimable comfort to the aged poor, who feel the winter's draughts as keenly as

their richer brethren, and have been known to suffer from rheumatics), and cupboards to stow away provisions in, such as are never thought necessary to build in newer tenements. Such cottages as these have usually a garden as old-fashioned as themselves, surrounded by a low stone wall—not a stiff, straight wall, but a deliciously-irregular erection, with a large block left every here and there, to serve as a stepping-stone for such as prefer that mode of ingress to passing through the wicket, and of which fact stone-crop and creeping-jenny have seized base advantage, and taking root, increased in such profusion that it would be useless now to give them notice of eviction. Over the wall a regiment of various-tinted hollyhocks rear their stately heads, interspersed here and there with a bright sunflower, whilst at their feet we find clove-pinks and thyme and southernwood and camomile flowers, and all the old-world darlings which look so sweet, and, in many cases, smell so nasty, but without which an old-world garden would not be complete.

All this is very nice, but it is not so wild and romantic as the other; indeed, as a rule, we may generally conclude that the most picturesque places to look at are the least comfortable to live in. Perhaps the cottage of all others in Priestley that an artist would select as a subject for his pencil would be that of Mrs. Cray, the laundress, and it is certainly as uncomfortable a home as the village possesses. It is not situated in the principal thoroughfare—the 'street,' as Priestly proudly calls it, on account, perhaps, of its owning the celebrated 'Dog and Fox'—but at the extremity of a long lane which divides the little settlement into a cross. It is, indeed,

the very last house before we pass into the open country, and chosen, doubtless, for its contiguity to the green fields which form the washerwoman's drying-grounds. It is a long, low, shambling building, more like a barn than a cottage, with windows irregularly placed, some in the thatched roof and others on a level with one's knees. It has a wide space in front, which once was garden, but is now only a tract of beaten-down earth, like a children's playground, as indeed it is. In the centre stands an old-fashioned well, large and deep, encircled by a high brink of stonework, over which ivy grows with such luxuriance, that it endeavours to climb, and would climb and suffocate, the very windlass, were Mrs. Cray's boys and girls not constantly employed in tearing it ruthlessly away. At the side of the well is the pig-sty, but the pigs share the playground with the children, rout away amongst the ivy, snuff about the open door, try to drink out of Mrs. Cray's washing-tubs, and make themselves generally at home. On a line stretching from the cottage to the gate above the heads of this strange company flutter a variety of white and coloured garments, like the flags on a holiday-dressed frigate; whilst the projecting wooden porch—a very bower of greenery—contains several evidences of the trade which is being driven within.

'The old home! How little she has thought of it of late! Yet she can see it in her mind's eye, as she stands pondering his words. It was not a particularly happy home to her—the homes of the poor seldom are. She had known hunger and thirst and cold, and, occasionally, the sound of harsh words within its limits, yet the memory of the dull life she led

there seems very peaceful now, compared to the excited and stormy scenes through which she has passed since leaving it.'

Yes! it was of this old home that Myra had been thinking three years ago, when Joel Cray stood beside her in the fields of Fretterley, and urged her to return with him. It was to this old home she flew for refuge from the bitter knowledge of her lover's want of love for her, and it is in this old home that we now meet with her again.

It is at the close of a long, hot September day, and she is sitting by the open window—not attired as we saw her last, in a robe of costly material, with her hair dressed in the prevailing fashion, and gold ornaments gleaming in her ears and on her breast. Myra is arrayed in cotton now: the shawl, which is still pinned about her shoulders, is of black merino, and the hat, which she has just cast upon the table, is of black straw, and almost without trimming. Yet there is a greater change in the woman than could be produced by any quality of dress—a change so vivid and startling, to such as have not seen her during this interval of three years, as to draw off the consideration from everything except herself.

Her face has fallen away to half its former size, so that the most prominent features in it are her cheek-bones, above which her large dark eyes gleam feverishly and hollow. Her hair, which used to be so luxuriant, now poor and thin, is pushed plainly away behind her ears; whilst her lips are colourless, and the bloodless appearance of her complexion is only relieved by two patches of crimson beneath her eyes, which make her look as though she had been

rouged. Her shape, too, once so round and buxom, has lost all its comeliness; her print gown hangs in folds about her waist and bosom, and she has acquired a stoop which she never had before. Eight-and-twenty—only eight-and-twenty on her birth-day passed, and brought to this! But, as she gazes vacantly at the patch of ground in front of her aunt's cottage, she is not thinking of her health—people who are dangerously ill seldom do: yet her thoughts are bitter. The children are playing there—five children between the ages of eight and fourteen, belonging to Mrs. Cray, and a little nurse-child of which she has the charge. The latter—an infant who has not long learned to walk alone—escapes from his guardian, who is the youngest of the Crays, and attempts to climb the ivy-covered brink of the well: more, he manages to hoist his sturdy limbs up to the top, and to crawl towards the uncovered pit. His guardian attempts to gain hold of one of his mottled legs; he kicks resistance; she screams, and the scream arouses Myra from her dream. She has just been thinking how little life is worth to any one: she sees life in danger of being lost, and flies to preserve it. As she reaches the well, and seizes hold of the rebellious infant, her face is crimson with excitement.

'Tommy *would* do it!' explains Jenny, beginning to whimper with the fright.

The infant doesn't whimper, but still kicks vigorously against the sides of his preserver.

Myra throws down the wooden lid, which ought at all times to keep the well covered; presses Tommy passionately against her breast; then putting him down, with a good cuff on the side of his head, to teach him better for

the future, walks back into the cottage, panting.

'Why did I do it?' she thinks, as she leans her exhausted frame upon the table. 'What's the good of life to him, or me, or any one? We had much better be all dead together!'

'Hollo, Myra!' exclaims the voice of her cousin Joel, 'what, you're back again, are you? Well! I'm right glad to see you, lass, though I can't say as you look any the better for your going.'

He has come in from his daily labour, through the back kitchen, and now stands before her, with his rough, kind hands placed upon her shoulders.

'Let me look in your face, my dear, and read what it says! No news. I thought as much. Didn't I tell you so before ever you went?'

'And if an angel had told me so,' she says, passionately, 'do you think I should have listened to what he said? What's health, or wealth, or peace, or anything to me, compared to the chance of finding *him* again, and seeing myself righted? And yet you blame me because I can't make up my mind to part with it—the only thing the world has left me.'

'I blame you, my dear? God forbid! Only you can't expect me to see you wasting all your life running after a shadder, without warning you of the consequences. You'll wear yourself out, Myra.'

'There's a deal left to wear out,' she answers.

'Well, you're not so strong as you ought to be, and you knows it; all the more reason you should hearken to what your friends tell you. This makes the sixth time you've been on the tramp after that 'Amilton.'

'Don't speak his name!' she says, quickly; 'I can't bear it.'

'Why don't you forget it, then?' he answers, almost savagely, as he deposits his tools in a corner of the room.

'Oh, Joel!' she wails, rocking herself backwards and forwards, 'I can't forget it—I wish I could. It seems written in letters of fire wherever I turn. There have I been toiling away for the last three months (I took the accounts at a large West-end shop this time), and walking myself off my legs between whiles, and yet I can't hear anything. I believe I've been to the house of every Hamilton in London, but it only ended in disappointment. I've spent all my money, and had to sell my clothes off my back to get home again into the bargain—and here I am, just as I went!' And Myra throws her head down on her outstretched arms, and falls to sobbing.

The sobs melt Joel's honest heart.

'My poor lamb!' he says, tenderly, 'you'd better give it up once and for all—it bea'n't of no manner of use. And suppose you found him, now!—just suppose, is he the man to right you?'

'Oh! I don't know—I don't know,' she says, amidst her tears.

'Yes, you *do* know; only you haven't the courage to speak out. He was sick of you three years ago; he told you as much: is he likely to be sweet on you now?'

But to this question there comes no answer but her sobs.

'I was sweet on you long before that, Myra,' continues her cousin, presently, in a low voice; 'but I ain't changed towards you. Why won't you let me mend this business. There ain't much difference between one man and another, but there's a deal to a woman in an honest name; and that's what I'll give you to-morrow, my dear, if you'll only make up your mind to it.'

'Don't, Joel! pray don't!'

'Are you never going to have another answer for me save that? One would think I wanted to do you a harm by marrying you. Tain't every one as would do it, Myra; but I knows all, and yet I says again, I'll make an honest woman of you to-morrow, if you'll choose to be my wife.'

'I can't—indeed I can't!'

'That ain't true! You could do it well enough, if you chose,' replies Joel, moving a little away from her.

'Lor, Myra! are you back again?' interrupts the coarse voice of Mrs. Cray, as she appears at the kitchen door, with her sleeves tucked up to her elbows, and wiping her steaming arms and hands upon her canvas apron; 'when did you reach?'

'About an hour ago,' says the girl, wearily.

'And no wiser than you went, I reckon?'

'No wiser than I went!'

'In course not: you're a fool for going. Trapesing about the country in that fashion after a wild-geese chase, when you ought to stop at home and look after the children!'

'I shall stop, now.'

'I'm glad to hear it, I'm sure. I've been worked to death, between the brats and the linen, since you went. And there's been fine changes up at the Court, too. The Colonel's brought home his lady; and a nice-looking creetur she is, so I hear (Joel's seen her—he can tell you); and old Mother Quekett's gone off in a huff. So much the better; I don't wish her good luck, for one; and if I see a chance of getting back the Court washing, why, I shall do it, particular if the Colonel's lady is what Joel seems to think her. Why, Joel, lad, what's up with you?—you look as if you'd had a crack on the head.'

'You'd better ask Myra,' replies Joel, sullenly.

'Why, you're never at logger-heads again, and she not home an hour! Here, Polly, lass, bring Tommy over to me, and go and see about setting out tea in the back kitchen. The kettle ain't filled yet. And you sit quiet there,' she continues, to the unfortunate Tommy, as she bumps him handsomely down on the stone floor to enforce her command, and leaves him there whimpering. At the sound of the child's voice, Myra raises her eyes quickly, and glances at him; then turns away, with a heavy sigh, and resumes her former position.

'What's up between you?' demands Mrs. Cray of her niece, when she has time to revert to the subject in hand. 'I suppose Joel don't like your ways of going on, and so you're huffed at it.'

'It isn't that,' replied Myra. 'Joel wants me to do what's impossible, and he's angry because I tell him so.'

'I wants her to be my wife, mother—that's the long and short of it. I want her to give up running back'ards and forrards after a will-o'-the-wisp (for if she found that fine gentleman as her mind is bent upon to-morrow, he'd no more marry her than he would you), and bide here at Priestley, and bring up an honest man's children. She knows as I've hankered after her for years, and that I'd make her a good husband, and never throw nothing of what's gone in her teeth. But she puts me off with saying it's impossible. What do you think of that?'

'I think she must be out of her mind not to jump at it. Why, here comes as good a fellow as ever worked for his bread, and offers to bemean himself by looking over all your tricks and making an honest woman of you, and you

won't have him. You must be mad!'

'Perhaps I am, aunt; but I can't help it.'

'Don't talk such rubbish—(sit down when I tell you, will yer?—or I'll give yer something to remember me by!)' This *parenthese* to the little scapegoat Tommy, who has dared to rise. Mrs. Cray does not only promise—she performs; and the child does not whimper this time—he roars.

Myra springs up hastily and snatches him from her aunt's hands.

'How can you be so cruel? You treat him like a dog!'

'Well, he ain't of much more value, nor half so much use. He cumburs up the place terrible, and is a deal of trouble with his violent ways. I've said more than once lately that he's more bother than he's worth.'

'Any ways, you're paid for him,' retorts the other.

'Do you think I'd keep him without?'

'Well, you might give a little feeling for the money, then. You'll split the child's head open some day.'

'And a good job, too, if I did. He ain't likely to be missed.'

The younger woman's breast heaves, but she does not answer.

Joel tries to make peace between them.

'Come! don't you think no more about it, Myra. His 'ed ain't split this time, and mother says more than she means.'

'I don't know that, Joel,' says Mrs. Cray. 'If she scorns you, nothing can't be too hard for her.'

'Nothing has ever been too hard for me—in your opinion,' replies Myra. 'I wish I was gone, and out of it all—that I do! Oh, my God!'—and with that commences weeping afresh. But her weakness

is soon interrupted by her aunt's hurried remonstrance.

'Come, now! shake yourself up, girl! There's quality coming up the path. Here, Joel! who can it be?'

'Blest if it ain't the Colonel's lady!'

And before they have time to do more than realise the fact, Irene's tap has sounded on the half-opened door, and her voice is asking for admission. Joel, very red in the face, stands bolt upright against the chimney-place. Myra hastily passes her hand across her eyes, and turns her head another way; whilst Mrs. Cray advances to receive the visitor with her forgiving nurse-child hiding his head in her skirts.

'Are you Mrs. Cray?' demands Irene.

'Yes, mum.' Mrs. Cray, remembering her last interview with Mrs. Quekett, and ignorant as to what dealings the Court people may now wish to have with her, is rather stiff and reserved at first, and stands upon her dignity.

'I have come to ask if you can do me a favour, Mrs. Cray. I have some friends staying with me who want some muslin dresses got up in a hurry for a flower-show at Fenton, and the Court laundress cannot undertake to let us have them by Wednesday. Could you?'

'Well, that depends a deal upon what they are like, mum,' replies Mrs. Cray; whereupon follows a vivid description of puffs and flounces and laces, quite unnecessary to the well-doing of my story.

'I don't see why I shouldn't give you satisfaction, mum,' is the laundress's concluding sentence; 'for it won't be the first time as I've worked for the Court gentle-folk by a many.'

'Indeed! I never heard your name till this afternoon, when my maid mentioned it to me.'

'That's likely enough, mum. I don't suppose you would go to hear it mentioned; but I worked for the Court for four years all the same. And it was a hard day for me, with all my poor children (six of them, if there's one), when I got turned away for asking my due.'

'Who turned you away, Mrs. Cray?'

'Why, bless you, mum, Mrs. Quekett, as was mistress of the Court then—who else should have done it?—and only because I wanted my three weeks' money, as I believe was lining her own pockets all the time. It's been a heavy loss to me, mum. But where's the use of talking, when a woman like that, as no one in the village has a good word for, is queen, and nothing less? You'll hardly believe it, mum, but she ordered me straight out of the house then and there, and forbid even the servants to send me their bits of things—and that was a couple or more pounds a quarter out of my pocket, let alone the other.'

Irene grows rather red during this harangue, and stands with her eyes on the floor, trying to break the tip of her parasol by digging it into a dusty crevice between the flags. She does not relish hearing this common woman speak the truth, and as soon as there is a break in the conversation she re-sents it.

'Well, Quekett is not mistress of the Court now, Mrs. Cray, as I suppose I need not tell you; and her likes and dislikes are nothing whatever to me. We shall often have friends staying with us, and the washing is likely to be more than our laundress can do. At all events, I can promise you shall have back the servants' linen; and, if I am satisfied with the way in which you get up the dresses I

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speak of, you shall have some of mine also.'

'Oh! thank you, mum, kindly. I saw you was a real lady the minute I set eyes on you; and as for my son there, who's seen you a many times, "Mother," he says to me—'

'Yes, yes!' interrupts Irene, anxious to cut short so embarrassing an eulogium; 'and I shall be sure to have the dresses by Wednesday, shall I not?'

'We can let the lady have them by Wednesday, can't we, Myra?' says Mrs. Cray, appealing to her niece. 'This is Monday, and you feels well enough to help, don't you?'

'Yes, I'll help,' is the listless answer.

'Is that your daughter? Is she ill?' demands Irene.

'She's my niece, mum, and but a poor creetur just now—there's no denying of it.'

'Indeed she does look very ill,' says Irene, sympathisingly, as she approaches Myra's side, and gazes with sad interest at the girl's hollow cheeks and staring eyes, in which the traces of tears are still visible. 'Do you suffer any pain?'

At first Myra is disposed to answer rudely, or not at all. She is sensitively alive to the fact of her altered appearance, and always ready to take umbrage at any allusion made to it; but she looks up into the sweet, kind face that is bent over hers, and feels forced to be courteous even against her own will.

'None now—sometimes I do.'

'Where is it? You do not mind my asking, do you? Perhaps I might send you something that would do you good.'

'Here!' replied Myra, pressing her hand just below her collar-bones, 'at night, when the cough's bad, and I can't sleep for it. I

sometimes feel as though I should go mad with the pain here.'

'And what kind of a pain is it?'

'It's just a gnawing—nothing more; and I'm a little sore sometimes.'

'And she can't eat nothing, poor dear,' interposes Mrs. Cray. 'She turns against meat and pudding as though they was poison; but she drinks water by the gallon. I'm sure the buckets of water as that girl have drunk—'

'And does not washing make you worse?' again inquires Irene.

'Sometimes; but I don't stand at it long—I can't.'

'And how do you employ your time, then, Myra?'

'I'm just home from a job in London, ma'am. I'm good at keeping accounts, and such like—it's what I've been brought up to; but it tried me rather this hot weather, and I'm glad to be back in Priestley again.'

'She ain't fit for nothing of that sort now,' interpolates Mrs. Cray.

'I dare say not. She must take care of herself till she gets stronger,' says Irene, cheerfully. 'I will send you some soup from the Court, Myra—perhaps that will tempt you to eat. And are you fond of reading? Would you like to have some books?'

'Oh, she's a fine scholar, mum,' again puts in Mrs. Cray. 'Many and many's the time I've thought we'd given her too much larning; but her poor uncle that's dead and gone used to say—' Here she interrupts herself to give her skirts a good shake. 'Get out of that, do, you varmint! What do you mean by hanging on to me after that fashion?'—which adjuration is succeeded by the appearance of Tommy's curly head and dirty face in the full light of day.

'Whose child is that?' cries Irene, suddenly.

The question is so unexpected,

that no one seems inclined to answer it. Joel changes feet awkwardly upon the hearth, which he has never quitted, and Myra turns round in her chair and looks full into Irene's face, whose eyes are riveted upon the child, still clinging for protection to the skirts of his nurse.

Mrs. Cray is the first to find her tongue.

'What! this boy, mum, as is hanging on my gownd in this inconvenient fashion?—but lor! children will be children,' she continues, as she puts her hand on Tommy's head and pushes him forward for Irene's better inspection. 'Well, he's not mine, though I look on him most as my own. To tell truth, he's a nuss-child.'

'A nurse-child! You are paid for keeping him; but who, then, are his parents?'

'They're very respectable people, mum—quite gentlefolks, as you may say. I think his pa's in the grocery line; but I couldn't speak for certain. My money is paid regular, and that's all I have to look after.'

'Oh, of course—of course. And—what is his name?'

'He's called Tommy, mum. Go and speak to the lady, Tommy.'

'But his surname?'

'Well, we haven't much call here to use his other name, mum; and I'm sure it's almost slipped my memory. What's the name as the gentleman writes as owns of Tommy, Joel?' she continues, appealing, in rather a conscious manner, to her son.

'I don't know. You'd better ask Myra,' he replies, gruffly.

'Brown,' says Myra, quickly; 'the child's name is Brown. You might go to remember as much as that, aunt.'

'Oh, it doesn't signify,' interrupts Irene, who perceives she has stumbled on an unwelcome sub-

ject, 'it is of no consequence;' and then, in her fresh summer dress, she kneels down on the uncovered stone floor, that has been trampled by dusty feet all day long. 'Come here, Tommy. Won't you come and speak to me? Look what pretty things I have here;' and she dangles her watch-chain, with its bunch of glittering charms, before his eyes.

Tommy cannot resist the bait: curiosity casts out fear; and in another moment his deep blue eyes are bent greedily upon the flashing baubles, whilst his dirty little fingers are leaving their dull impress upon pencil-case and locket and seal.

'Oh dear! mum, he ain't fit as you should touch him; and his feet are trampling the edge of your gownd. Here, Jenny, make haste and put Tommy under the pump till the lady looks at him.'

'No, no! pray don't; he is doing no harm.'

So the dirty little brat is left in peace, whilst the lady takes stock of his eyes and mouth and hair. Once, in his ecstasy at finding a gold fish amongst her treasures, he raises his eyes suddenly to hers, and she darts forward as suddenly and kisses him. Then, becoming aware that she has done something rather out of the common, and that Mrs. Cray and Joel and Myra are looking at her with surprise, Irene rises to her feet, dragging the bunch of charms far out of disappointed Tommy's reach, and, with a heightened colour, stammers something very like an apology.

'I like little children,' she says, hurriedly; 'and—and—he has very blue eyes. Are you fond of lollipops, Tommy?'

'I want the fies,' says Tommy, from behind Mrs. Cray's gown again.

'Oh fie! then you can't have it.

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Now be'ave yourself, or I'll give you a good hiding,' is the gentle rejoinder.

Irene feels very much inclined to give him the 'fiss,' but has sufficient sense to know it would be a very foolish thing to do; so she takes a shilling out of her purse instead.

'See, Tommy! a beautiful bright new shilling! Won't you go and buy some lollipops with it?'

Tommy advances his hand far enough to grab the coin, and then retreats in silence.

'Say "thankye" to the lady,' suggests Mrs. Cray.

But Tommy is dumb.

'Say "thankye" at once; d'ye hear?' and a good shake is followed by an equally good cuff on the small delinquent's head.

'Oh! don't strike him,' cries Irene, earnestly—'pray don't strike him; he is but a baby. Poor little Tommy! I am sure he will say thank you, when he knows me better.'

'You're too good to him, mum; you can't do nothing with children without hitting 'em now and then: which you will find when you have a young family of your own.'

'I must go now. My friends are waiting for me,' says Irene, whose colour has risen at the last allusion. 'Good evening, Mrs. Cray! Send up for the dresses to-night; and the cook shall give you some soup at the same time, for your niece.'

But she has not long stepped over the threshold, before Myra is after her; and they meet by the ivy-covered well.

'You'll—you'll—be coming this way again, won't you?' says the girl, panting even with that slight effort.

'If you wish it, certainly. Would you like me to come and see you, Myra?'

'Very much! There are few

faces here look at me as yours does.'

'My poor girl! then I will come, with the greatest pleasure.'

'Soon?'

'Very soon.' And so they part; and Irene joins Mary Cavendish and Oliver Ralston, who have been walking up and down the green lane outside the cottage, waiting for her.

'What a time you've been!'

'Have I? There's a poor young woman there in a consumption, or something of the sort, who interested me. And such a dear little child: a nurse-child of Mrs. Cray's. I stayed to talk to them.'

'How long is it since you have developed a love for children, Irene?' says Mary Cavendish, laughing. 'I did not think they were at all in your line.'

'I never disliked them; and this baby has such beautiful earnest eyes.'

'It is remarkable what lovely eyes some of the children of the poor have. I remember, when I was in Berwick——'

'Let us get over the stile here; it leads to the Court by a much shorter way,' exclaims Irene, interrupting her cousin in the rudest manner in the world. But so is Miss Cavendish always interrupted if she ventures to make the slightest reference to her visit of the summer. She has been dying, heaps of times, to relate all the glories of that period to Irene, but she has never been able to advance farther than the fact that they took place. The mere name of Berwick is sufficient to send Mrs. Mordaunt out of the room or—as in the present instance—over the stile.

Irene cannot get the remembrance of poor Myra's hollow features and attenuated figure out of

her head. It forms the staple subject of her conversation at the dinner-table, and she talks of it all the evening, while her guests are rambling about the gardens and shrubbery; and she is sitting on a bench with her husband in the dusk, and flirting with him in her little quiet way.

'It is very sad,' says Colonel Mordaunt for about the fiftieth time, 'and I'm very glad that you should have fallen in with her, my dear. It is in such cases that the rich can do so much to help the poor. Sickness is bad enough to bear when we are surrounded by every luxury; it must be twice as hard when one is deprived of the necessities of life.' And he continues to puff solemnly into the evening air, while his arm tightens round the waist of his wife.

'Yes,' says Irene, leaning up against him, 'and you should see how thin and pale she is, Philip. Her bones look as though they were coming through her skin. And she has no appetite, her aunt says. I have ordered cook to send her down some soup and jelly.'

'Quite right. I am afraid you would find several more in the same condition if you were to look for them. Country poor are too proud to beg.'

'I will make a point of looking. But I never saw any one so terribly thin before. And her eyes are hollow, poor thing!'

'You seem to have taken a great fancy to this girl, Irene.'

'She has awakened a great interest in me, though I cannot tell why. She seems more than ill—she looks unhappy.'

'And have you told Colonel Mordaunt about the child you took such a fancy to?' laughs Mary Cavendish, who is loitering near enough to hear the last words. 'It's a new thing for Irene to be

running after babies—isn't it, Colonel Mordaunt?'

Irene flushes; it is not so dark but he can see the change, and a new tenderness creeps over him.

'What baby, darling?' he says, as he presses her closer to him. Irene is vexed at the turn in the conversation; she is not a bit sentimental, and she cannot affect to be so.'

'It was not a baby,' she replies, almost curtly: 'it was a big child of two or three years old.'

'And you took a fancy to it—why?'

Colonel Mordaunt's 'why' has a totally different bearing to the 'why' that falls upon Irene's ears. She grows scarlet, and almost starts away from him.

'Why!—why! For no particular reason—only—because—I don't care for children in general, I know—but—but—'

Whilst she is hammering out a reasonable answer, her husband supplies it.

'But you thought,' he whispers close into her ear, 'that some day you might possess such a child of your own, Irene!'

'I—I thought— Good heavens, no! I never thought anything of the kind,' she exclaims aloud; and then, out of sheer nervousness, she laughs. The laugh grates on Colonel Mordaunt's ear; he draws himself away, not offended, but hurt.

'If such a prospect holds no charms for you, Irene, you might keep the unpleasant truth to yourself. It is not necessary to laugh at me.'

'Laugh!—did I laugh?' she replies, still tittering. 'I'm sure I didn't know it. I don't think I quite know what I did do.' And with this, the incomprehensible creature falls to crying, not heavily, but in a smart little shower of tears that savour strongly of the

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hysterical. Colonel Mordaunt does not know what to make of it; he has been little used to women, and this one seems to him, at times, a mystery; but he adopts the safe course: he throws his arms about her neck and begs her not to think any more about it. And, apparently, Irene adopts his advice, for she dries her eyes, and flits away from his side, and the next minute he hears her light laugh ringing out through the shrubbery at some jest of Oliver Ralston's.

They are a very happy party at Fen Court now; even Isabella Mordaunt seems to have crept out of her shell, and to dare to enjoy herself after a demurely quiet fashion; and as for Colonel Mordaunt, he has been a different man since rid of the presence of the awful Mrs. Quekett. Not that he was quite himself for some days after the housekeeper's summary departure. A gloomy dread seemed hanging over him at that time, for which Irene was unable to account. But at the end of a fortnight, Mrs. Quekett's temper having evaporated with change of air, she thought fit to send her master a letter, written as though nothing unpleasant had happened between them, which intimated her whereabouts, and wound up with her compliments to his 'good lady.'

Colonel Mordaunt's mind was instantly relieved; and the next post took back a lengthy epistle in reply. Irene saw neither of these letters, nor wished to do so; but she could not help observing how much more at ease her husband appeared to be after receiving and despatching them.

And with the fear of Mrs. Quekett's everlasting displeasure lifted off his mind, Colonel Mordaunt became pleasanter and more lively than she had seen him since their marriage. He petted Irene all day long, chaffed Isabella, and ap-

peared thoroughly to enjoy the companionship of Oliver, as though, in the affection of these three, he had all he desired in this life to make him happy.

His wife had begun to wish that it could go on thus for ever, and that they had no friends coming to break in upon their domestic felicity. But the guests have arrived, and the unruffled intercourse is continued, and Irene is being carried quietly along the stream of life as though she had left all its storms behind her, and there were no black clouds gathering in the future.

* * * *

Colonel Mordaunt is of an exceedingly benevolent nature; he takes great interest in the poor of the parish, and never neglects an opportunity of sympathising with or relieving them; but after a while he does grow very sick of the name of Myra Cray. It appears as though his wife were always harping on it; every topic, from whatever point started, veers round, in some mysterious manner, to the sick girl at the laundress's cottage; and whenever he misses Irene, he is sure to hear that she has 'just run down' to the end of the village with a book, or a pudding. At last he grows fidgety on the subject.

'You are, surely, never going out in this broiling sun!' he exclaims, one hot morning in October, as he meets his wife arrayed for walking, a basket of fruit on one arm, and a bottle of wine under the other. 'I cannot allow it, Irene. You will get fever or something of the sort: you must wait till the day is cooler.'

'Oh, I can't wait, Philip,' she says, coaxingly, for poor Myra is so much worse. She broke a bloodvessel last night, and they have just sent up to tell me so.'

'What good can you do by going down?'

'I don't know: but I think she will feel my presence to be a comfort; she has taken a great fancy to me, you know. Besides, I want to carry her a few grapes.'

'Send them by a servant. I cannot have you risk your health by encountering such fatigue for any one.'

'It will not fatigue; and I want to see Myra myself.'

'Take the pony-chaise, then.'

'No, indeed! before your lazy grooms will have put the harness together, I shall be by her bedside.' And running past him, she takes her way down to the village.

Colonel Mordaunt is vexed. He likes his wife to be interested in the parishioners, but her visits of late have been confined to the Crays—who are generally considered to be the least deserving of them all. Besides, he argues, the house is full of guests, to whom she owes more attention than is consonant with absenting herself from their company at all hours of the day. When they meet at luncheon, consequently, he is what is termed a little 'put out;' but she is too full of her *protégée* to notice it.

'Poor Myra!' she sighs, as she takes her seat at the table. 'I am afraid there is little hope for her; she is so weak, she cannot speak above a whisper.'

'She oughtn't to be allowed to speak at all, after having broken a bloodvessel,' says her husband, shortly. 'Will you take a cutlet, Irene?'

'No—nothing, thank you. I couldn't eat; my whole mind is absorbed by the thought of that poor girl.'

'But you are not going to allow it to spoil your luncheon, are you? Running about all the morning, and eating nothing on the top of

it. The end of it will be, you will be ill.'

'Not while there is work for me to do—as there ever is.'

'Nonsense! you talk of it as though it were a duty. It is a much greater duty for you to eat when your husband asks you to do so.'

'Don't ask me then, dear Philip; for I really can't.'

He does not press her, but directs his attention to the rest of the company; whilst she leans back in her chair, pale, pensive, and almost entirely silent.

'You won't go out again?' he says to her, as the meal is concluded and they rise from table.

'Oh no! I don't think so.'

'Go, then, and lie down, my dear. You have been too much excited. I never saw you more overcome.'

'I think I will lie down, just for an hour or two. My head aches terribly.'

Then his trifling annoyance vanishes, and he is all sympathy and tenderness; supporting her upstairs with his arm around her waist, and coaxing and petting her like a sick child, until she has exchanged her dress for a cool wrapper, and laid down on her bed: when he steps about the room, on tiptoe, like a woman, pulling down the blinds and putting everything within her reach that he thinks she may require.

'I shall be back by six, my own darling,' he whispers, in farewell; 'and I hope you will have had a good sleep by that time.'

'I dare say I shall,' she murmurs, dreamily; and then he leaves her. At the appointed hour he is back again, and entering the room cautiously, for fear of startling her, finds all the blinds drawn up, and Phoebe sitting by the open window, stitching a rent in one of her mistress's dresses.

'Mrs. Mordaunt gone down?' he says, interrogatively.

'Yes, sir. I believe she's gone out, sir.'

'Out! Not out of doors again?'

'I think so, sir. A message came up from Cray's for my missus, about four o'clock, and she put on her things at once and went to them. I believe the young woman's sent for her, sir.'

'Too bad! too bad!' exclaims Colonel Mordaunt, angrily—though referring more to the Crays than to Irene. 'But I suppose she will be back to dinner.'

'I suppose so, sir. My missus said she would wear a white muslin this evening, and I was just stitching this one together for her.'

But dinner-time arrives, and they are all assembled in the

dining-room, and still the mistress of the house is absent.

'It is close upon seven: she must be here directly,' remarks Colonel Mordaunt, though uneasily.

'A note from Cray's, if you please, sir,' says the footman, placing a crumpled piece of paper before him.

He opens it and reads:

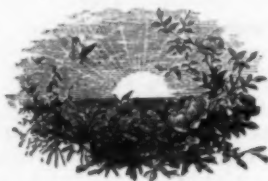
'DEAR PHILIP,—Pray don't wait dinner for me. It is impossible that I can come home just yet.'

'Yours,

'IRENE.'

'Serve the dinner at once!' exclaims Colonel Mordaunt, in a voice of real displeasure, as he tears up the note into a dozen fragments and casts them into the empty grate behind him.

(To be continued.)



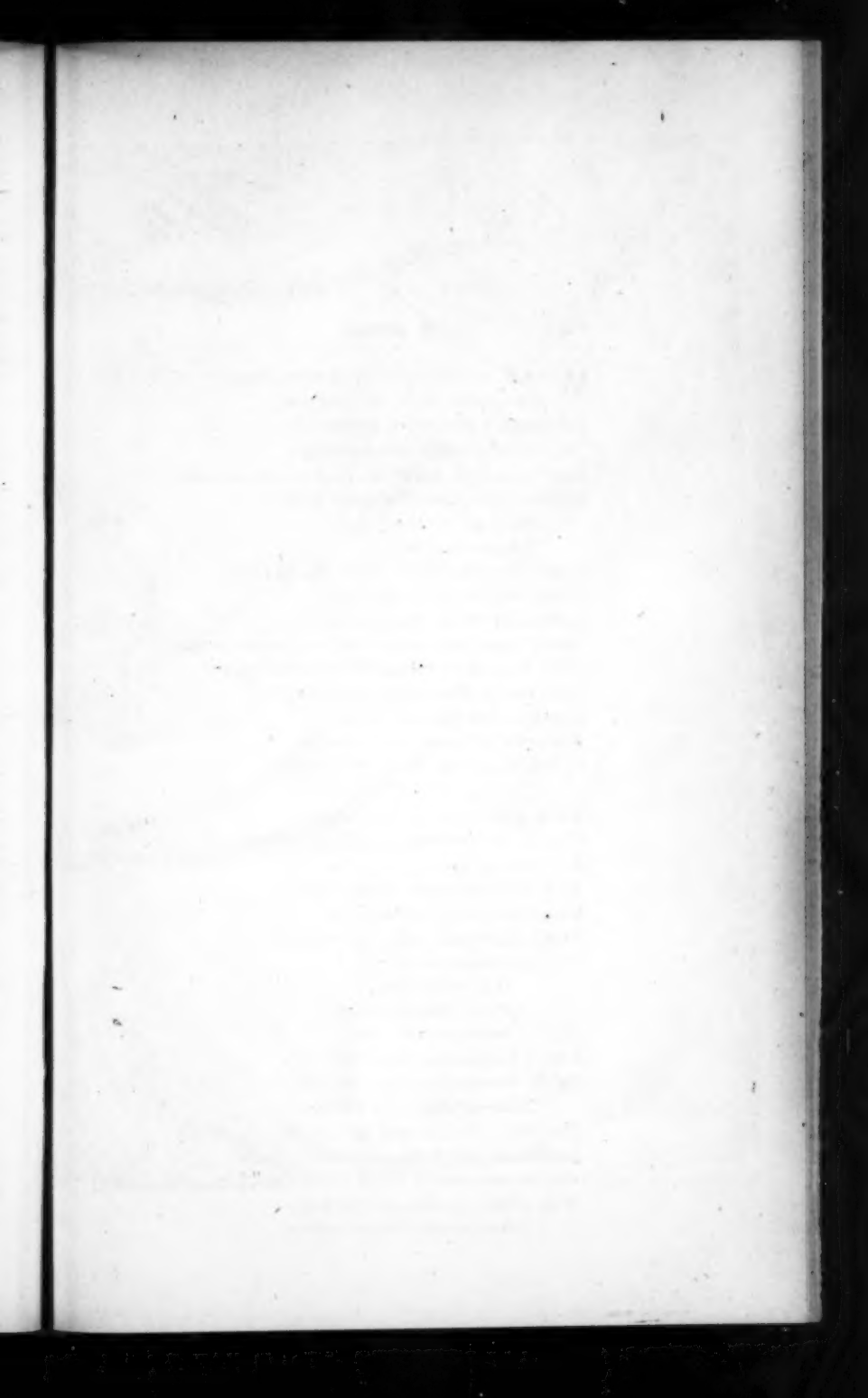
LOVE AND MONEY.

A *Medley.*

'WHEN love and all the world were young,'—
 Oh! golden age by the poet sung;
 For though it exist but on mythic page,
 'Tis a fiction pleasant, this golden age:
 Now love and the world are grown cunning and old,
 And the golden age is the age of gold!
 And, oh! the blue,
 That deep, clear blue,
 In the eyes of the Cupid whom once we knew
 Happy, careless, sunny and true,
 Is tinged by the prevalent aureate hue.
 There is something wrong with his gossamer wings,
 Which hang like wretched bedraggled things;
 There rests a cloud on his visage fair,
 A golden cloud—but gold is care;
 And as for the heart, that symbol old
 Of love he carried—'tis turned to gold!

A ring is made, let the fight begin,—
 Who are the combatants? Which will win?
 And well-bred speculation is rife
 As to the genuine odds in the strife.
 Moneybags *versus* the lady's pet,
 That is the match; now, who will bet?

A curious crowd
 Is gathered there,
 And the champions, too,
 An ill-matched pair;
 One all buoyant with hope and youth,
 Fondly dreaming that love and truth
 Can outweigh half a million;
 The other a strange, misshapen wight,
 But looking as if he meant to fight,
 Void of each possible manly grace,
 With yellow eye and jaundiced face,
 Like a liverless Indian civilian.







But, oh ! for the hopes of the youthful knight
Whom daughters love and duennas slight,

But whose purse has scarcely a stray ' bob ;'
'Tis weight and substance carry the day,
And naught will avail in the coming fray ;
Or love or beauty, or youth or health,
'Tis the longest of odds on the man whose wealth
Is the wealth of a Bengal nabob.

And she, the lovely, expectant fair,
The prize of battle, sits calmly there,

Like the bride of classic story,
What time in famed Ætolia's land
There fought, by the river's golden strand,
'Gainst the river-god's strength and glory,

Alcmena's son,
Who conquering, won
The Princess Dejanira.

Yes ; there she sits, the *insonciant*e fair,
With unflushed brow, and with golden hair ;

And, as to her whole attire, a
Girl of the period, skilled in the art
Well to dissemble each throb of heart.

A few more rounds, and the battle is o'er ;
Moneybag victor—would you more ?

And the social critics of the fray
Forejudged aright the fate of the day ;
As for the girl of the period, she
Bows to society's just decree.

Does she see, through a mist of tears,
The buried hopes of her girlish years ?

Or do her eyes grow heavy and dim
The while her heart flies back to *him* ?

Murmur sadly her lips his name ?
Bodes her bosom of sin and shame ?

Trembles her soul, that thought beside—
An unloved husband, a venal bride ?

What of it ? girls of the period sing,
' Mammon is Hymen, and Moneybag king.'

T. H. S. ESCOTT.

A FIRST NIGHT.

THE first night of a new play. There are some people who never miss it. One goes out of curiosity, another professionally. The regular playgoer likes to be present because his attendance on these occasions has become a habit with him, just as the Derby is with another man. One goes because he is a friend of the dramatist; another because he is not; a third is there on account of his interest in the management; a fourth simply in the hope that the management has made a mistake. The critics go in fulfilment of their calling. Of course they are bored whether the play is good or bad. It is the thing to be bored. Sometimes they are indeed to be pitied; but they take out their torture tenfold when they sit down to scarily the piece. The most astonishing thing is, when you think they have been dreadfully bored, and when you are glad that they have gall at home for ink, to find by their papers that they have been delighted. At other times, when you think they have an opportunity of honestly praising a piece, you encounter fierce condemnation. Truly, critics and criticism are inscrutable. I give them up. Thank goodness I am not professionally engaged, except once in a way. Now and then I sit amidst the critics with my bristles up, look bored, feel bored, and go out envying the people who are not called upon to write their opinions of what they have seen and heard.

But we all like a first night; it is so unlike any other night. You see people whom you wish to see. There is a sort of suppressed excitement in the house which gives an outside interest to the play. Then there is always the chance

of a row. Pieces have been killed on a first night. It is true the custom of 'taking care' of the house has grown of late into such a habit that a sort of check has been established. Something is indeed required to neutralise the coldness of the general *habitués* of theatres on first nights; but a crowd of applauders scattered through the house rather overdoes the business.

Let us look round a first night's house and see who the people are in the stalls and boxes. They are the actors who interest one more than the people on the stage. We will see the play itself when we have read the notices. In the stage-box is Mr. John Oxenford, a white-headed, genial-looking gentleman, and critic of the 'Times.' It is not necessary to mention the satellite who always accompanies him. But in the same box we notice Miss Neilson (Mrs. Lee) and her husband. Mr. Lee was the subject of a great practical joke in America, arranged by Mr. Sothorn, and mentioned in the papers a short time ago. The 'New York Herald' devoted a couple of columns to the story. Miss Neilson is quite as pretty as her photographs. She wears a low dress, very much after the fashion of the portrait of Nell Gwynne in 'Pepys' Diary.' Mr. Oxenford will talk during the performance, but when you read his criticism in the 'Times' you find that he knows all about the play. In an adjacent box are the Levys of the 'Telegraph.' Their chief critic is nursing his leg in the stalls. He is a young man, with a brown beard and moustache, and a well-formed, intellectual head. His name was mentioned in the action brought by Charles Reade

against the 'Morning Advertiser,' and it is likely to crop up in a libel suit pending, I believe, against the defunct 'Zig-Zag.' Mr. Clement Scott has made himself known by his well-written and pungent criticisms. He was 'Almaviva' in the London 'Figaro,' and he writes for the 'Observer' and the 'Telegraph.' Close by Mr. Scott sits, silent and muffled up to his chin, Mr. Heraud, who used to write for the 'Athenæum,' and is the hero of that story of Jerrold, in which Mr. Heraud's poem about 'Hell' is mentioned. The cleanly-shaven face, somewhat cynical in its expression, and ornamented for the time with a pair of glasses, looking out of a box on the other side of the house is the well-known countenance of Charles Dickens, son of the famous author of 'Pickwick.' Mr. Dickens writes those excellent dramatic notices which appear in 'The Queen.' The bright-eyed young man by his side, intently watching the piece, is Albery, whom Dickens will presently chaff on account of the failure of 'Oriana,' but the proprietor of 'All the Year Round' will get a shot back quite as wounding as his own. Albery is clever at repartee, but apt to be personal. Not more so, perhaps, than the gentleman who is just entering the box, Mr. Stephen Fiske, the husband of Mrs. John Wood, for whom Albery is engaged upon a new play. Mr. Fiske rubs his eyes, and fires off a quiet sally about the piece, at which Dickens turns round to shrug his shoulders and laugh. Mr. Fiske came over to England, some years ago, with the winning yacht in the famous international race, a graphic description of which he wrote for the 'Times' and 'All the Year Round.' He was for many years the dramatic critic of the 'New York Herald,'

and is now credited with the stings of the 'Hornet,' of which paper he is the proprietor. It is not generally known that Fiske was the author of 'English Photographs, by an American,' and the magazine papers which caused a sensation under the *nom de plume* of 'An American Fenian.'

It is a capital night for celebrities, this first night of our sketch. Shirley Brooks, the editor of 'Punch,' is in the stalls, and in the next seat one of his principal contributors, Mr. F. C. Burnand, who gets up something like Mario, though there is no resemblance between the two. Mr. Burnand is a handsome man, for all that, and one of the most industrious of our public writers. Looking over the stalls from the dress-circle, into which they have been forced by their late arrival and a pressure below, are Leopold Lewis, of 'Bells' fame, who is industriously stroking his whiskers; and Mr. Tom Purnell, who is evidently expressing his opinion of the piece in tones sufficiently loud to attract general attention. Mr. Lewis was editor of 'The Mask,' which had a short, but brilliant career; Mr. Purnell wrote those 'Athenæum' criticisms, signed Q., which Charles Reade scarified in an article in which he called Purnell 'a cipher, signed with an initial.'

Turning again to the stalls, our glass falls upon the puckered, but genial face of E. L. Blanchard, whose knowledge of the drama and its history, past and present, is perhaps unequalled. A round-faced, kindly-looking lady in black (whom few people seem to know, and those few the more elderly men of the time), sitting at the back of the stalls and talking to another lady, evidently her sister, is Mrs. Charles Dickens. Her sister is Mrs. Romer, a widow.

They are neighbours in the Regent's Park district, and evidently enjoy first nights. One of Mrs. Dickens's younger sons, a bright, intelligent young fellow, has recently been reading, for charitable institutions, some of his father's works, and has acquitted himself with credit. Mrs. Dickens is a noble woman, never to have obtruded her story upon society. They say she has a box full of 'David Copperfield's' love letters. Dickens, whose correspondence was always studied, must have written charming love letters; how charming, we may never know.

Mr. Frith, the artist, is sitting near the orchestra with one of his sons, and farther on is Mr. Moy Thomas, of the 'Daily News.' Close by sits Mr. Fildes, a young, earnest toiler in the fields of art, who is destined for fame and fortune. The dark gentleman to whom he is talking is Joseph Hatton, editor of 'The Gentleman's Magazine,' and, what is perhaps more, author of 'The Valley of Poppies,' an *édition de luxe* of which is to be published by and by, with illustrations by Fildes, who drew the pictures that illustrated Dickens's last thoughts in 'Edwin Drood.' Mr. Hersee, a well-known musical critic, finds himself yonder in the midst of a bevy of ladies, whom he would not disturb, as he

goes out, for the world. Mr. Dunphy, of the 'Morning Post,' calm and self-possessed, with the living image of a pretty girl whose portrait hung No. 1 on the Academy walls two years ago by his side; and Mr. E. C. Barnes, the artist, whose 'Scarlet Letter' has, strange to say, been crowded out of this year's Academy, make up our rapid sketch of the front of the house.

On the occasion in question the piece was a success. We called the author, and cheered him loudly. It is seldom that a piece is damned nowadays. A notable exception occurred the other night at the Adelphi, when a new piece was hissed off the stage, and the management had to announce that it would not be performed again. 'Up a Tree' and something else, however, would take its place, said the gentleman, who had the happiness of speaking to the house, which burst into fits of laughter at this announcement of 'Up a Tree.'

If there are any readers of 'London Society' in search of a new theatrical sensation, and who know nothing of first nights, in the professional sense, let them book stalls for the next notable occasion, and compare notes with this brief sketch, and the articles that are to follow it from the pen of

ROBIN GOODFELLOW.



THE TALK OF THE TOWN.

THE EREWTHONIANS AGAIN—THE 'MATRIMONIAL GAZETTE'—PRIVATE THEATRICALS—THE AMATEURS—DANCING DOGS—A THREATENED CLÔTURE—SOME PICTURES AT THE ACADEMY.

SOME few months ago the chronicler of the 'Talk of the Town,' in making a few observations on a book called 'Erewhon,' ventured to suggest that the notions of the Erewhonians were not altogether so illusory as some practical people might think, and that there is a growing tendency in many minds to reverse the positions of the criminal and the invalid—to compassionate the former and to be harsh upon the latter. Certain circumstances have recently occurred which compel FREE LANCE to return to the subject, as far as the aspect of crime is concerned, and as they have been much talked about, it may perhaps be as well to take another glance at the question. Not long ago a horrible murder was committed in London. It was, apparently, of the most abjectly brutal kind, for it was absolutely purposeless and unnecessary, as far as common sense could gather from the surrounding facts. An individual occupying a respectable position was recognised by certain witnesses as answering to their own description of the murderer, and he was at once arrested and subjected to a severe process of examination before a magistrate. In the result the charge against the accused was dismissed, and he was set free. The generous sympathy of the British public—romantic enough at times—was instantly aroused, and a very handsome subscription was realised on behalf of the person whose identity was unfortunately mistaken, and who to a certain extent profited by the error. No doubt this was all very

right and very proper. Nothing can be more fearful than to be accused of such a crime; and no compensation can be too great for such suffering. But public sympathy, unfortunately, went into extremes. Not content with offering all reasonable amends, the police authorities were extravagantly condemned for having acted upon suspicions which their experience justified them in regarding as *prima facie* serious; and in so terrible a case it should have been sufficiently obvious that no evidence ought to be neglected. Now, it is impossible to deny that the position of the innocent accused was of the most painful description, or that a subscription amounting to a thousand pounds could adequately compensate the unfortunate man for the temporary inconvenience and possible agonies of mind he underwent; but we surely ought not to forget that the interests of society are paramount, and that when all social life suffers from the commission of a hideous crime, even the slightest opportunities should not be neglected which might tend to the discovery and punishment of the culprit. Heaven forbid that I should deprecate the warm sympathy that was shown to the unhappy man who successfully proved his innocence, but I cannot forbear deprecating quite as strongly the vituperations which were cast upon the guardians of the public security. Mistakes must and will occur at times, and inasmuch as our police system is being perpetually condemned by ready writers in the daily press as insufficient and in-

competent, it is not easy to see how it is likely to be improved if it is never to act where suspicion is not the same as certainty. If the accused had turned out to be the guilty man everybody would, perhaps, have found fault with the police for not having laid hands upon him sooner. The moral of the narrative is sufficiently obvious.

The next case to which I would refer is that of the gas-stokers who were recently fêted and treated as heroic martyrs on being released from prison. These persons were tried, found guilty of the offence imputed to them, and punished according to law. It is unnecessary for me to recapitulate the details of their case; it is sufficient to say that no strike was ever so universally condemned as that in which these gentlemen were prominent. I merely wish to observe that in their case the Erewhonian theory was fully carried out, and their crime, with its consequences, was treated as a subject for deep compassion by a circle of admiring friends. I am only surprised that a testimonial in the shape of a comfortable annuity has not been presented to each of these long-suffering assertors of a principle.

Lastly, I feel compelled to refer to a more recent case. A highly educated and intelligent gentleman, a member of a liberal profession, was convicted of theft, and sentenced to six months' imprisonment. Nobody denies the truth of the charge or the bare justice of the sentence. But the Erewhonians have taken the matter up, and have opened a subscription list for the purpose of placing the criminal in a comfortable position when he has worked out the sentence which his own wilful act has brought upon him. It is urged, and I am painfully aware

of the strength of the plea, that this is an exceptional case. An individual with the tastes, education, and sensitiveness of a gentleman has found the work of life so hard that he has been compelled, in his struggle for existence, to appropriate the property of his neighbour for the purposes of his own support without asking their permission. The immediate result is that which usually attends larceny, but the ultimate consequence is a subscription list and a possible competence. Had this individual belonged to a lower order in the social scale, nobody but the gaol chaplain would have taken the smallest interest in him. This state of facts cannot but awaken reflections which are not altogether pleasant. It suggests in a lively manner that there is 'something rotten in the state' of England. We find ourselves asking the startling question, Is the crime of an educated man to be deplored and punished more or less than a corresponding error on the part of an uneducated man? We may admit to the full that in the case we are considering the punishment is far more terrible than that which awaits the professional depredator, to whom it is a matter of comparative indifference whether he is living at the expense of the community in the gaol, or flourishing at the expense of the individuals whose pockets he occasionally picks in the streets. Still, philanthropists are bound to remember that the professional thief and the amateur larcenist are both citizens; both have an equal claim to be rescued from infamy, and it is hard to see why a great distinction is to be drawn between them. No doubt it may be said, and said with a certain amount of truth, that the amateur is willing to gain his livelihood by honest work, and

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the professional is not, and that the former has failed in getting any opportunity. But if this is to be put forward as a sound argument on behalf of the unhappy amateur, the public, who are called upon to sympathise and subscribe, are certainly justified in demanding that all the circumstances of the case shall be fully laid before them, and that they shall have an opportunity of deciding how far the guilt of the amateur was physically inevitable. I would not have it thought for a moment that I quarrel with the warm and generous feeling that prompts many excellent persons to rush forward with their ready gold and cheques to give this particular criminal a good chance of making another start in life—for it is never too late to mend—but I would only ask them to consider where and why they draw the line. And I would venture to go a little farther, and suggest that it is possible that a deeper and more discriminating search might show them that there are scores of men living hard and unhappy lives whose claim to generosity and true sympathy has not as yet been enhanced by the questionable advantage of conviction of deliberate dishonesty.

Various and wonderful are the conditions of this social life of ours, and not the least remarkable among the signs of the times is the existence of a journal 'devoted to the Promotion of Marriage and Conjugal Felicity.' Persons in the daily habit of walking along Pall Mall know how persistently they are annoyed by certain news-vendors who anxiously press upon them the purchase of a certain paper called 'The Matrimonial News.' Once, and once only, did I see a blushing youth buy a copy,

but an unconquerable shyness on the part of the public prevents, apparently, any large sale of this humane weekly in the open street; but I am informed that the proprietors have no reason to be sorry that they have started in the Promotion - of - Conjugal - Felicity line. A copy has fallen into the hands of FREE LANCE, and he admits to having been somewhat startled by its contents. Upwards of three hundred persons, all (according to their own account) tolerably well-to-do, good-looking, good-tempered, and eminently fitted for the mutual duties and responsibilities of domestic life, advertise for matrimonial partners! It is distressing to think in what narrow circles these heart-hungry ladies and gentlemen must hitherto have passed their lives, and we cannot but compassionate them for not having found among their friends and acquaintances the kindred soul without which their destiny is incomplete. But after reading through a few of these gushing advertisements we cannot help thinking that unforeseen difficulties may arise when the answers are sent in and the advertiser has to make his choice. For instance, the clergyman, aged thirty-two, with an income of 2,500*l.* a year and a nice residence, who desires to open correspondence with a lady with a view to an early marriage, must be simply overwhelmed by the cartes-de-visite and letters of self-recommendation he has undoubtedly received by this time. We own to feeling extremely curious as to whether the early marriage has yet taken place, and, if so, we should much like to know, for future guidance, the process of selection by which the reverend gentleman eventually decided upon the ruler of his home and his affections. How anxiously he must have

studied the features portrayed in the photographic galaxy; how thoughtfully he must have regarded the various mouths and chins, and dubiously wondered which gave the best hope of equable temperament and cheerful manners; nor can we suppose that suspicion altogether slumbered as he gazed upon the artistic representations of the curling locks or ample chignons. And then with what deep searchings of heart must he have gradually weeded out the fair candidates for two thousand a year and a nice residence, till he found his choice narrowed to some half dozen eager damsels, one of which was destined to preside at his hospitable board, and relieve him of those household troubles which had possibly driven him into the arms of the editor of the 'Matrimonial News.' But then the terrible moment must have come—which is it to be? Possibly reminiscences of college days may have come to his rescue, and we think it far from improbable that the good clergyman shuffled the photographs in his hat, and drew out one at a time, determined to marry the young lady whose carte should leap forth last from the lot. Further speculation is needless; let us hope that Fate has favoured him. But we cannot forbear the reflection that, if marrying by advertisement is likely to become the fashion, domestic happiness will, in all probability, become the exception, and not the rule, as we would fain hope that it now is. Persons who 'open correspondence' with strangers 'with a view to early marriage' will inevitably find out too late that a hasty and ill-considered marriage is perhaps the greatest curse that man or woman can bring upon themselves. We must all fully appreciate the benevolent motives expressed by the

editor of 'The Matrimonial News' in his address to the public, and we have no doubt that he is fully aware of his responsibilities, but, at the same time, it is impossible to repress a very grave fear that this well-intentioned gentleman will have a great deal to answer for in the matter of nagging wives, surly husbands, and ill-assorted unions generally; and it is sad to think how many curses, 'not loud, but deep,' will possibly be poured upon his devoted head.

In the April number of 'Macmillan's Magazine' Mr. F. C. Burnand commenced a biography entitled 'My Time, and what I have done with it.' The title of the story suggests a confession of no ordinary nature, and we hope in due course to be let into the secrets which prompted the cheery author's 'Happy Thoughts,' and the morals of the bright burlesques with which he has revived a drooping stage. What I am looking forward to anxiously is a chapter on Private Theatricals. Here is a theme upon which Mr. Burnand might write luxuriantly, and perhaps detail a melancholy experience. The regular theatre nowadays is, unfortunately, highly capable of leaving a sense of deep depression upon the audience; but the vast majority of amateur performances would be shrouded in the saddest gloom if they were not usually succeeded by the exhilarating effects of supper. Why are such exhibitions usually so extremely bad? The actors are generally intelligent people, and some of them have evidently a certain amount of natural talent. The reason is not very recondite. Amateurs do not, or will not, understand that histrionic abilities are almost worthless if they are not duly drilled. It is not sufficient that the actor

can repeat his words clearly and with proper emphasis: he must recollect that he is playing up to other actors, and he must consider the stage effect upon the audience. If amateurs could see themselves as they are seen, they would, perhaps, realise the fact that their ignorance of stage business and technicalities weighs terribly against their tolerable abilities and evident earnestness. Rushing in to a difficult performance, as they usually do, after half a dozen rehearsals, it never seems to occur to them that they are presenting to their audience what would be an execrably bad first night of representation by trained professionals. They ask a great many people to come and see them act, and scarcely take ordinary pains to do justice to themselves and to pay proper respect to their visitors. They appear to be under an impression that so long as they have a pretty close acquaintance with their words, and can infuse a certain amount of humour or pathos into what they have to say, they have done all that is necessary. The last thing that they think of is the elaborate work of stage management; and hence the usual ludicrous result. What amateur does not know the mutual congratulations that go on behind the cramped wings of the temporary stage erected by Mr. Nathan or Mr. Simmonds—how well the piece is going! That is to say, there has not been a dead stage wait, and no particular strain has been put upon the services of the prompter. Of course, if the object of the actors is merely to arrive at the conclusion of the performance, such congratulations may be well deserved. But if he has any regard for the general effect upon the audience, and the impression he will leave upon their minds after the curtain has finally fallen, the

amateur actor must make up his mind to take far greater trouble about his rehearsals. Amateurs generally appear to think that the object of rehearsals is to satisfy the actors that they are perfect as far as their memories are concerned; they neglect the vast importance of stage business, and leave it to take care of itself at the representation, even if they ever give it a serious thought. Whether they go out right or left, whether a table is centre, up the stage or down the stage, whether a 'situation' is effectively arranged or not, whether the entrance or exit of the principal character is dramatically rendered—are matters to which amateurs appear to be sublimely indifferent. The absolute and undeniable truth of this assertion justifies one in saying that the great fault of amateurs rests in their thinking only of their individual selves, and in being totally regardless of their fellows and their audience. Gabble, gabble, gabble, the amateur pours out his words in a resistless flood, totally regardless of the fact that his speech has to travel round a considerable area, and he moves awkwardly about the stage, utterly heedless of the great principle of *repose*, without which no man can hope to be a successful actor. His companion on the stage may have to say something which wins applause or laughter; the noise is nothing to him—on he goes with his words, caring nothing for the patent fact that the audience are losing the whole point of his speech. If amateurs would only condescend to attend more carefully to their rehearsals, and submit to the stage management of some competent professional, there is no reason why, if they possess an ordinary amount of histrionic power and general intelligence, they should not afford a very to-

lerable evening's entertainment. I am in a position to quote a case in point.

Last Easter week FREE LANCE happened to be at that not very lively watering-place, Bournemouth, and he had the good fortune to be present at some amateur performances given on behalf of the Bournemouth Sanatorium, by Sir Percy and Lady Shelley in the elegant theatre at Boscombe Place. The entertainment lasted for four nights, in the course of which three new and original pieces were acted. An ordinary play-going spectator might have been well surprised at the artistic finish and thorough ease of the whole performance; but his astonishment would have ceased at once when he learned, as I did, that the amateur actors had conscientiously gone through many severe rehearsals day after day, and had patiently submitted to the experience and discipline of the well-known actor, Mr. Horace Wigan. Hence their undoubted success in the pieces given—'Astrid,' a Norwegian legend, dramatically rendered by Sir Percy Shelley; 'Our Bitterest Foe,' a charming one-act drama by Herbert Gardner; 'Jack Robinson,' an extravaganza, by Sir Percy Shelley; the comedietta entitled 'Dearest Mamma,' by Walter Gordon; and the favourite old farce 'A Thumping Legacy,' by J. Maddison Morton. Let me recommend amateurs to attend to their rehearsals as strictly and untiringly as I have reason to believe the gentlemen and ladies at Boscombe Place did, and they will have no fear of hearing critics talk about their performances as being not 'amenable to criticism'—the most doubtful compliment it is possible to pay.

As the season goes on the complaint waxes louder and louder

that the young men won't dance. This want of terpsichorean energy on the part of the *jeunesse dorée* of London Society was lamentably apparent last year, but it has now really become a very serious matter. Midnight comes, and the young ladies are still unpartnered; the gentlemen at last stroll in from theatre, opera, or club, but they don't look at all like quadrilles or waltzing. A conventional turn or two round the room, and then a prolonged lounge against the wall, appears to be what is called dancing nowadays. This is all very sad and disappointing for the young ladies who are 'just out,' and fondly anticipate that their first London balls will be thoroughly lively and amusing. And their chagrin must become almost intolerable when they further remark, that the elegant creatures who ought to be busily employed in soliciting the favour of a dance and taking strong physical exercise in careering round the ball-room, seem to find ample amusement in gossiping with the chaperones or paying undue attentions to the handsome married ladies. It seems as if the men will do anything rather than dance—they even prefer supper. What kind of a sign of the times are we to consider this expanding portent? Shall we think that in London Society dancing is doomed, and that the light fantastic toe will soon cease altogether to tread the light measure to Messrs. Coote and Tinney's fascinating music? Shall we deem that we are on the verge of a social revolution, when galop melodies shall be hushed for ever and balls shall be no more? We may rely upon it that the catastrophe will not be brought about without a strong remonstrance on the part of the interested individuals for whom balls have a deep significance. It is

whispered that in certain female coterie schemes of vengeance are being planned. Many of the ladies, it is hinted, are meditating some kind of strike. They say that the young men are becoming too eminently selfish; that Adonis prefers his club, and, possibly, has found unedifying charms in a sphere of society where conventionalities are not so strict, where dancing is really dancing, where light jests and unrestrained laughter reign supreme, where formal introductions are not *de rigueur*, and where the smiles and sighs of well-dressed syrens allure with more resistless coquetry than is to be found in the more demure salons of the West End squares. 'These things ought not so to be,' the stately matrons mutter, as they gather in solemn conclave at five o'clock tea, or in the drawing-room after the banquet. 'Matters are going on from bad to worse. Marriageable daughters remain on hand season after season, and marriageable men appear to feel no remorse from the fact, but rather to rejoice in their shameless freedom. What is the reason of this state of things?' Ah! what, indeed! My dear madam, if you could gain admittance to the club smoking-room—which, for the sake of the peace of that hallowed spot, it is, perhaps, as well that you cannot—you would probably hear reflections upon the state of society, which, if they did not altogether startle you, might at least guide your reflections towards paths into which they have hitherto declined to stray. But, failing such assistance from unpleasant insight, what is to be done? It is said that certain leading ladies—leading, that is, in the social, not in the dramatic sense—are seriously contemplating a *clôture* of their salons, and are threatening to make a solitude in the rose-

gardens of the season. Since the gilded youth of society expresses such a sense of boredom with the tame delights of the usual routine, a decided check shall be put upon the large expenditure involved in unnecessary ball-giving; and then, perhaps, the erring sheep will learn to miss the folds from which they have too often strayed. But before a hasty decision is arrived at it might be worth while considering that the sheep might grow to rejoice in fresh fields and pastures new, and declare, with the lotos-eaters, that they will return no more. May not a better remedy be suggested? Without saying that the sensational effects of the Lord Mayor's Fancy Ball should be closely imitated in future, the remark might be hazarded that some fresh elements of interest might be added to the dull rounds of conventional balls. Two suggestions may be offered, to begin with. In the first place, it should be laid down as an inexorable rule that no attempt should be made to get more than a given number of persons of both sexes into a given area, so that locomotion may not be impeded, and that the heat, worry, and disappointment invariably engendered by a jostling crowd may be carefully avoided; and, in the next place, some new dances really must be invented. Everybody is utterly sick of the perpetual quadrille, lancers, and waltz. Surely, in this ingenious age, some creative mind will rise equal to the occasion, if encouraged to make the experiment, and dancers will be relieved of a monotonous performance, which is only paralleled by the exercise of the treadmill!

All persons who have read 'Kenelm Chillingly,' Lord Lytton's latest and, perhaps, best novel, will remember the instruc-

tions given by Chillingly Mivers, the editor of 'The Londoner,' to his art-critic. He said: 'By-the-way, when we come to review the Exhibition at Burlington House, there is one painter whom we must try our best to crush. I have not seen his pictures myself, but he is a new man, and our friend, who has seen him, is terribly jealous of him, and says that if the good judges do not put him down at once, the villainous taste of the public will set him up as a prodigy. A low-lived fellow, too, I hear. There is the name of the man and the subjects of the pictures. See to it when the time comes. Meanwhile, prepare the way for onslaught on the pictures by occasional sneers at the painter.' Let us hope that no such instructions are nowadays given out by able editors; or, at all events, are confined to such trifles as the drama. Certainly we are not disposed to think that any painter has suffered from such false criticism at this, the one hundred and fifth Exhibition of the Royal Academy of Arts. *FREE LANCE* does not pretend to be like Iago—nothing, if he is not critical; experience has taught him that professionals are not unfrequently like those people who 'rush in where angels fear to tread;' he is content merely to state his impressions, without recording them as deep experiments in the 'Gay Science.' Chief impressions, then, *FREE LANCE* is content to record. Mr. Le Clear's portrait of Edwin Booth, the American tragedian, presents to our gaze a highly intellectual and expressive face, and I should be extremely glad if this actor would favour us with a visit. He may depend upon it we should give him a hearty welcome. Mr. V. Prinsep's picture of Lady Teazle concealed by the screen suggests the inquiry whether Miss Fawcitt

was right in wearing powder at the Vaudeville Theatre in this character; otherwise we should say that the modern actress comes up to Mr. Prinsep's idea, which seems a very good one. Mr. Leslie's 'The Fountain' is classical and poetic, but the background is somewhat wearisome, and the figures look a little too much as if they were conscious of a photographer standing ready with his machine. 'Foundered,' by Mr. W. L. Wyllie, is rather a ghostly production, and, while we admit the remarkably fine effect of water, gives us the notion that the ill-fated vessel is foundering, or has foundered, in about four fathoms, a depth scarcely sufficient for practical purposes. Very much do I like Mr. A. J. Stark's notion of 'The Angler's Nook;' the colouring is excellent; the pike, perch, and spinning-rod, are very real; the angler, we presume, is at lunch, resting from his labours. 'The Strayed Maskers,' by Mr. E. Benson, is a highly dramatic and tolerably successful effort, but it hardly tells its own story with sufficient plainness. Next to this hangs Mr. J. G. Cooper's representation of a churchyard, which, while certainly pleasant to look upon, hardly comes up to the idea embodied in the verses chosen as the text. There is a fluffiness about the foliage which is not pleasant, and I own to an objection to seeing sheep feeding upon verdant graves. Mr. B. W. Leader's 'English Cottage-houses' is very pretty, but suggests the want of an improving landlord; thus the picturesque wars with utilitarianism. 'Hay Time,' by Mr. V. Cole, is a rich bit of English scenery. Mr. B. G. Head's picture, 'Little Poachers,' may be condemned as too glaring in colouring; but quite as strong natural effects may be often seen in the beech-woods of

Bucks. Mr. H. Hardy contributes a forcible picture of a fight between two lions, a lioness crouching in the foreground—a notion taken, alas! only too probably, from the natural history of man; and, to complete the fable, vultures are hovering in the distance. In Mr. A. F. Payne's 'Alice in Wonderland' we are introduced to a child who has been reading that interesting work, and is evidently thinking whether or not the adventures of Alice were enviable or the reverse. The painter seems to have been concerned mostly with the carpet, the curtains, and a scattered pack of cards; but he may certainly be congratulated on the success of his endeavours. 'Early Efforts,' by Mr. J. Clark, represents a little boy in humble life drawing the portrait of his dying grandpapa; not at all a bad little picture, this. Mr. Redgrave's 'Fading Year' is hardly sufficiently autumnal, but it is very striking. Mr. G. A. Storey's 'Scandal' is one of his happiest efforts. Several excellent persons have called, apparently, upon an invalid lady, but, instead of troubling themselves much about her ladyship's state of health, they are all intent upon mutual gossip, and forget the object of their sympathy in their eager desire to hear 'something new.' The grouping in this picture would do credit to the ablest stage manager; the whole scene is conceived in the true spirit of comedy, and is carried out with remarkable dramatic effect. Each face tells a story of its own. Mr. Redgrave's 'Lonely Well-head' is refreshing to gaze on in this hot weather. 'Christ's Reproof to the Pharisees,' by E. Armitage, R.A., has doubtless been the subject of much discussion. The faces and figures of the Pharisees are undeniably excellent, but the Christ is a failure.

Somehow or other modern artists seem wholly incapable of that deep suggestion of divinity which is the wonder of the old masters. Mr. Archer's portrait of Mr. Henry Irving, in his character of Charles I., is not very satisfactory; it may be Charles I., but it is not Mr. Irving; and the probabilities are that, at some distant period, it will be sold by an auctioneer as a true portrait of the ill-fated monarch. 'Tintoretto painting his dead Daughter,' by H. O'Neil, is a painful subject, but it is sympathetically treated; the pale corpse is lying on the bed; the painter sunk in sad reverie, and on the canvas before him lies the representation of the child, with all the roses of health restored to her cheek, not dead, but sleeping. 'La Levée de Monseigneur' is a charming picture, and we heartily congratulate Mr. C. Calthrop upon his success. The little prince is lounging in an arm-chair, while a magnificent personage puts on his little shoes; a cross-faced cardinal, to whom Monseigneur's education has evidently been entrusted, has just made his entrance through the half-drawn tapestry; toy soldiers and cannon are on the floor, emblems of the political difficulties which Monseigneur will have to contend with when he has grown a little older; the valet is heating the curling-tongs—ah! for which will Monseigneur care most in years to come—cannons or curls? The arrangement of the apartment is well conceived and admirably executed. 'St. Paul at Philippi,' is the diploma picture of Mr. W. C. T. Dobson, R.A. The figure of the saint is very fine. The 'Subsiding of the Nile,' by Mr. F. Goodall, R.A., is a grand picture, fully sustaining the reputation of the artist. The light upon the distant pyramids is truly wonderful.

FREE LANCE.

NEW BOOKS RECEIVED.

'He Cometh Not,' She Said.' By Annie Thomas. *Chapman & Hall.*

'A Vagabond Heroine.' By Mrs. Edwardes. *R. Bentley & Son.*

'By and By.' By Edward Maitland. *R. Bentley & Son.*

'Which Sister?' By Sydney Mostyn. *R. Bentley & Son.*

'Over Turf and Stubble.' By Old Calabar. *R. Bentley & Son.*

'The Songs of Wales.' Edited by Brinley Richards. *Boosey & Co.*

WHEN a novel has been pronounced by one of the first critical authorities of the day to be consistently 'vulgar' and 'commonplace,' one naturally approaches its perusal with a degree of trepidation. It was in this spirit we took up 'He Cometh Not,' but we are pleased to be able to record that we were agreeably disappointed. 'Commonplace' the story may be, for it is simply a narrative of the repeated heart-aches experienced by a woman who has pinned her faith on the love of an unprincipled and irresolute man; and nothing can be more common in this world than disappointment; but 'vulgar' (in the ordinary acceptance) it certainly is not. There are a few expressions we should like to see expunged, for though they are used naturally, and much as we are doomed occasionally to hear them, the style of conversation patronised by the young women of the present day is not sufficiently interesting to deserve reproduction. With this exception, however, 'He Cometh Not' is a thoroughly bright and readable book, and to our mind the best Annie Thomas has given us for a long time. The various characters, whether lovable or

otherwise, are all graphic, and the bits of scene-painting are not less real. The story, also, although slight, possesses the charm of carrying the reader's interest with it to the end.

It is a real pleasure to take up a book like Mrs. Edwardes'. From Belinda O'Shea, the vagabond heroine, to Rosie, her foolish, affected stepmother, and her self-deceiving lover, Roger Temple, each character is individual and strong, and Belinda herself, with her 'espargottes,' her 'paume' playing, and her 'bolero' dancing, thoroughly original. The worst fault we can find with the story is, that it is too short. We should have liked to have had pages more of Belinda's wild doings, and Rosie's absurd conversation, and Roger Temple's perplexities. It all ends too soon, but while it lasts, it is delightful. Mrs. Edwardes has made long strides forward, since she wrote 'Archie Lovell,' and takes her place now in the first rank of our female novelists.

'By and By, an Historical Romance of the Future,' by the clever author of the 'Pilgrim and the Shrine,' is composed somewhat after the style of the 'Coming Race,' although it differs largely, both in treatment and design, from that much read work. It is supposed to be written some centuries hence, when the Victorian era shall have become a mere matter of bygone history, and every scientific invention now in its infancy have advanced to a state of perfection. Aerial travelling is to be, by that time, the commonest mode of locomotion,

and the electric wires, intersecting the earth, air, and sea, to afford means of instantaneous communication with each other, for all mankind. Laws are to be amended (not before required), the rights of women established, and royalty done away with. The sacrament of marriage is to be divided into three classes. The first, to be disannulled only by the law; the second, by mutual consent; the third, at the option of one of the contracting parties alone. Men and women, too, are to have grown so sensible as not to consider it actually incumbent on married people to live in the same house, and worry each other's lives out. What a number of domestic quarrels might be avoided in this day, if Mr. and Mrs. Jones only met once a week, and then when they were on their best behaviour. 'By and By' makes one feel horribly discontented to think one cannot possibly live long enough to come in for a share of all these good things. But let us take comfort. Mr. Maitland assures us that spirits also love, marry, and bring up small families, so there is a chance for all; and perhaps when we have contracted spiritual unions, we shall not be envious of the free and easy way they will have settled things down here below. Let us, at all events, live in hope that it may be so.

We find it difficult to say anything favourable of 'Which Sister?' which, though an improvement on the author's former work, is very feeble, both in plot and character. The accident of one sister supplanting the other in the affections of a young man, who does not appear to have been particularly worth the consideration of either, is the sole basis on which the story rests; and the only

sketch that retains any idiosyncrasy is that of Aunt Ann. Whilst the author, however, in the person of her heroine, apologises for the lapses of grammar of which this worthy is occasionally guilty, she should not forget her own. 'My lady love is you,' is rather an awkward sentence, while 'more easier,' and the use of the past 'was' for the subjunctive 'were,' are worse than awkward. On the whole, though, 'Which Sister?' is superior as a work of fiction to the 'Deceased Wife's Sister,' which is not, however, saying much.

'Over Turf and Stubble' is, as its title indicates, a record of sporting experiences, which are told in a thoroughly easy and conversational manner, and comprise several curious anecdotes connected with the pursuit of game. It is a volume to take up after dinner, or on a journey, or over a cigar. There is nothing to fatigue in it, and much to interest; and every narrative bears the stamp of authority upon its pages.

'The Songs of Wales: a collection of National Melodies,' has reached us. To say that they are edited by Brinley Richards, and published by Messrs. Boosey, is to say that the compilation is as complete as it can be. Miss Edith Wynne has made many of the airs we find in this volume familiar to the English public, but there is scarcely one that will not become popular, on acquaintance, for its own sake. Amongst so many it is difficult to select favourites, but we must give prominent notice, amongst the sentimental ones, to 'All through the Night,' 'A Gentle Maid in Secret Sighed,' and 'The Bells of Aberdovey,' whilst the 'Cambrian Plume' and 'Cambrian War Song,'

with the famous 'March of the Men of Harlech,' are grand specimens of martial music. We recommend every one who has not yet seen it to procure this little

volume, which will introduce them to a selection of vocal gems that cannot fail to afford them as much profit as pleasure.



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